

GENDER AND POLITICS: A RHETORICAL ANALYSIS OF THE FIRST WOMEN VICE-  
PRESIDENTIAL NOMINEE ACCEPTANCE ADDRESSES

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This thesis is dedicated to my family, whose love and encouragement each and every day motivates me and encourages me to be the best version of myself. And to Matt, without your love and encouragement none of this would be possible. I would simply be lost without you.

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## ABSTRACT

### GENDER AND POLITICS: A RHETORICAL ANALYSIS OF THE FIRST WOMEN VICE-PRESIDENTIAL NOMINEE ACCEPTANCE ADDRESSES

by Alicia N. Piippo-First

Only recently have women had the opportunity to participate in the United States political system, but obstacles still remain for women who choose to run for high political office. The purpose of the study is to examine the struggles women still face when developing political rhetoric when running for political office. Three academic theories were used to develop the foundation for understanding the rhetorical struggles women have faced in society and more specifically politics: feminist criticism, muted group theory, and double bind theory. Genre criticism was also used to provide a foundation for campaign oration. These three theories coupled with genre criticism help to explain the struggles women have faced, and still face, in developing political rhetoric. This project examined two rhetorical examples that highlight women achieving prominent political nominations and the struggles each faced in developing political rhetoric: the vice presidential candidate acceptance addresses of Geraldine Ferraro and Sarah Palin. When such rhetorical opportunities occur for the first time it is steeped in rhetorical significance that opens doors to areas of research that have not been previously available. Ferraro and Palin's addresses serve as examples of rhetorical milestones for not only feminist rhetoric but political rhetoric as well.

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## CHAPTER I

### RATIONALE

The purpose of this project is to provide the foundation for understanding the struggles women still face in society when developing political rhetorical strategies. In the not so distant past women have been excluded from the majority of the political process. As a result women have not had ample opportunity to rise to high political office. Considering the disproportionate representation of women in American politics (Gutgold, 2005; MacManus, 2010) it is essential that when women do achieve political success the struggles of those individuals are noticed and studied. Three academic theories will be used to develop the foundation for understanding the rhetorical struggles women have faced in society and more specifically politics: feminist criticism, muted group theory, and double bind theory. Feminist criticism serves as a tool for understanding the historical inequalities that have developed over time. Muted group theory serves to demonstrate the lack of rhetoric for women to develop a sense of identity and political voice leaving women “muted.” Lastly, double bind theory explores the socially constructed traps that have developed to continue the inequalities between men and women through rhetoric. Once the rationale has been established through the first portion, the project will examine two rhetorical examples that highlight women achieving prominent political nominations and the struggles each faced in developing political rhetoric: the vice presidential candidate acceptance addresses of Geraldine Ferraro and Sarah Palin.

#### Women in US Politics

In American history, society is taught about the founding fathers, but seldom mention of the founding mothers. Since the founding of America, women have largely been excluded from

American politics until recent history. In roughly thirty countries women have served as president or prime-minister (Gutgold, 2005) while the United States has yet to elect a woman as vice president. It took 127 years after the founding of the United States before a woman served in Congress (Ondercin & Welch, 2005). American women received the right to vote in 1920 after the ratification of the 19th Amendment (MacManus, 2010), which prohibited voting restrictions based on sex. At that time women who chose to run for office had little success. The majority of women who gained higher political positions early on did so through the passing of their husbands (Ondercin & Welch, 2005). It has only been in recent history that women have had the opportunity to run for office.

The political participation of women in America has been a long and gradual progress. Victoria Claflin Woodhull was the first woman to run for President of the United States in 1872 (Sheeler & Anderson, 2013). Ironically, women did not have a constitutional right to vote in 1872. Had Woodhull won the election she would have been too young at the age of thirty-four to accept the office and on Election Day, Woodhull was arrested for sending illegal materials through the mail prohibiting her from campaigning (Gutgold, 2006). There were a select few women who ran for office despite knowing there was not a chance they would win but instead to make sure their voices were heard. The process was slow but gradually women began making gains. Wyoming was the first state to grant women the right to vote in 1889 even though at the federal level voting was still prohibited. In 1917 Montana elected the first woman, Jeannette Rankin, as the first woman to the United States House of Representatives. It was not until the second wave of feminism which began in the 1960's that brought women's equality issues to the attention of the American people.

The involvement of women in American politics grew during the 1960's and has continued. During this time women have gained political positions at both the local and national level. In the 1992 election year known as the "Year of the Woman" a surge of women candidates entered the political arena and increased their presence in politics but not without challenges. According to Burrell, "women increased their numbers in the House from twenty-nine to forty-seven members, or 6.7 percent to 10.8 percent. In addition, four new women were elected to the U.S. Senate" (2005, p. 27). Gradually, women have continued to gain more influential political positions. In 2002, California congresswoman Nancy Pelosi became the first woman in a 216 year history of the U.S. Congress to win the Democratic House Minority Leadership (Fox, 2010). After the 2006 elections the Democrats were placed in the majority of the House and Senate while elevating Nancy Pelosi to the position of Speaker of the House in 2007 (Han, 2007). Pelosi became the highest ranking woman elected to the U.S. Congress (Fox, 2010).

Despite the gains women have made in politics many factors have limited the number of women in politics and in leadership roles. Even though women make up half of the population in the United States, traditional American views still place men in public roles while women were expected to maintain the home and tend to domestic needs and childrearing (Han, 2007). Women tend to enter politics later in life than men which causes a disadvantage for women to work through the political system (Han, 2007). By the time women enter the political arena they face running against their male counterparts who are more than likely an incumbent. The American political system has been structured to favor incumbents, which makes it difficult for women to enter politics and gain leadership roles that can serve as an example to other women wishing to enter politics (Han, 2007). Voters tend to have less information about challengers and may rely on stereotypes of challenging candidates to make voting decisions (Burrell, 2005). Incumbents

have the benefit of name recognition and a standing history with past fundraisers. According to Han, "the candidate emergence phase of a campaign - when a person moves from being a potential to an actual candidate - is still one of the biggest hurdles for women to overcome" (2007, p. 8). It is during this stage that women are disadvantaged since they have not had the opportunity to develop influential networks for fundraising and campaigning. According to Burrell, "empirical comparisons of the fund-raising efforts of male and female candidates for the U.S. House of Representatives and for state legislative office show that, by the early 1990's, women had achieved equality with men in raising funds to finance their campaigns" (2005, p. 26). The social constraints that have been placed on women have contributed to the low representation of women in government. Only in recent history have women gained equal fundraising opportunities. Even though women are on par with fundraising with their male counterparts women are still considerably underrepresented in elected offices (Burrell, 2005). In understanding the challenges women have faced in gaining political equality throughout the history of the United States it is not surprising that although women have made tremendous gains there still remains a great deal of work to be done.

There are a variety of factors that contribute to a group being subjugated. To better understand the subjugation of women the use of feminist criticism, muted group theory, and double bind theory together work to illustrate the difficulties women have faced in developing equal standing in society. Feminist criticism identifies how rhetoric has been developed through a patriarchal society to enforce the social values and norms that favor those in power, men. As Millet (1971) describes in *Sexual Politics*, "Groups who rule by birthright are fast disappearing, yet there remains one ancient and universal scheme for the domination of one birth group by another - the scheme that prevails in the area of sex" (p. 24). Men determining who has power to

shape society has left women with little opportunity to participate in the decision making process. Early on those women who choose to advocate for women's rights were viewed as attacking the patriarchal society. As a result of excluding women from fully participating in society women were left as a muted group; without a voice to be heard and without a path to construct a political identity. It has not been until recent history that women have begun to develop a voice of their own. Through this developed voice women have gradually begun to move into positions of societal and political power. However, what often occurs when women reach such positions is that they are faced with defending oneself as a woman in a traditional male role, hence facing what Jamieson (1995) describes as a double bind. Even though women have broken through many barriers from the past many remain hidden in the lining of society, which is all the more reason for researching the struggles that have been and still remain. In order to understand this struggle it is necessary to begin with a review of feminist criticism.

### Feminist Criticism

Feminist criticism addresses the issues women face through the exploration of rhetoric. According to Karlyn Kohrs Campbell, "feminist rhetoric is substantively unique by definition, because no matter how traditional its argumentation, how justificatory its form, how discursive its method, or how scholarly its style, it attacks the entire psychosocial reality, the most fundamental values, of the cultural context in which it occurs" (2003, p. 75). The exploration of feminist criticism is constructed on the basis that language is male dominated which has allowed for the construction of social values to be dominated in the favor of men (Kramarae, 2004a). Language is one contributing factor to the socially constructed gender stereotypes that have developed to favor men. Feminist criticism focuses on the ways in which rhetoric has been used to fight and/or reinforce the socially constructed values that society has developed over time.

Traditionally, language has been regarded from a masculine perspective, leaving women with only the opportunity to express themselves through the use of a language that constrains them. French existentialist and feminist, Simone de Beauvoir stated it best, “humanity is male and man defines woman not in herself but as relative to him” (1952 p. xxi). It is through de Beauvoir’s, *The Second Sex*, that the concept of the “Other” is introduced to describe the struggles that women face in a patriarchal world. According to de Beauvoir, men are viewed as the normal standard to follow, and when women cannot live the normal standard then they become the “Other.” By defining the world in terms of the masculine form women are set for failure because it is impossible to be a woman of equal standing in a world that is designed to favor men. This is especially reinforced through the development and use of language. It is through language that people express themselves and when language restricts that ability then it is important to investigate the causes. Feminist criticism investigates the restrictions that have been placed on women by explaining the implications of such causes. For instance, Kramarae explains, “women’s speech has been described as polite, emotional, enthusiastic, gossipy, talkative, uncertain, dull, and chatty; men’s speech, in contrast, as capable, direct, rational, illustrating a sense of humor, unfeeling, strong (in tone and word choice), and blunt” (2004c, p. 9). Based on the use of feminist criticism it could be argued that due to the nature of men and women’s speech, socially constructed norms have been developed, and it is through such norms that men’s position in society has been elevated because it has been used as the standard for all people to follow.

The language of a patriarchal society has led to the development of specific roles for both genders. According to Campbell, the role women play in society is determined by the dominant male values in society (2005). When women are in a position that has been typically held by men

they face violating the traditional feminine role. Griffin explored Mary Wollstonecraft's argument that women and minorities had been isolated by a hierarchical system constructed through a patriarchal ideology (2005). By placing the male gender in the position of power this allowed the patriarchal ideology to determine the norms of the system and the construction of rhetorical identities for those in the system (2005). French feminist Luce Irigaray stated:

women's social inferiority is reinforced and complicated by the fact that woman does not have access to language, except through recourse to "masculine" systems of representation which disappropriate her from her relation to herself and to other women. The "feminine" is never to be identified except by and for masculine, for the reciprocal proposition not being "true." (1985, p. 85)

This long standing construction of gender roles through language allows scholars to understand the role of feminist criticism in works of rhetoric that illustrate the role of the female speaker.

Throughout history there have been women who have stepped outside the social norms. When a woman does break through the glass ceiling, society does not always use that as an example of the difficulties women face but as an explanation that there is no glass ceiling. It is the notion that if one woman has been able to do it, then others can do it as well. This notion of the token woman in power that Cloud (2005) illustrates in the article, *Hegemony or Concordance? The Rhetorical Tokenism in "Oprah" Winfrey's Rags-to-Riches Biography*, allows people to believe that the barriers are dissipating because one woman was able to accomplish a position in power. In actuality it only illustrates how few women have been able to break through the glass ceiling, and many more are left still fighting. This approach is useful in understanding how women in their political positions form their messages about their accomplishments and trials in regards to gender. Gender is an important part of the message in

the sense that it is the main element women have to overcome because they are more closely associated with roles of being mothers and wives than roles of social or political influence. This is what Griffin would refer to as, “the struggle to overcome the separation between women’s socially constructed identities and their unrecognized and undervalued potentials” (2005, p. 523). The role of women in society had been alienated from developing any kind of self governing efficacy. This contributes to the dilemma that women face when running for office.

The role women play in significant moments in history can be viewed in a variety of aspects based on the development of rhetoric. For instance, a woman as the vice president or vice presidential candidate could be viewed as holding the second highest office in the United States but the role also illustrates some characteristics of a traditional feminine role. There is a clear distinction in the level of power between the roles of the president and vice president; one has more power than the other. Since power is traditionally reserved for men, one could argue the vice presidency has been dominated by the presidency (Bostdorff, 1991). As Bostdorff describes, “just as women traditionally have been controlled by the men around them, vice presidents and vice-presidential candidates in recent times have been completely subordinate to the more powerful man around them: the president or presidential nominee” (1991, p. 2). The president can be viewed as the male role while the vice-president is there for the president’s needs, which serves as the traditional feminine role. As Bostdorff illustrates the vice president’s role, “they offer contributions behind the scenes, while maintaining the public persona of a dutiful wife who defers to her spouse and echoes his thoughts and beliefs” (1991, p. 4). Although a woman in the vice presidency would break down some barriers it would also illuminate other challenges that had not previously been examined. Based on the feminist approach it is the hidden meanings of

language that are significant, and the interpretations that can be derived that illustrate the importance of gender in language.

When women are in political positions society takes notice, and not always because of the importance of the position but in the fact that a woman is in the position. The rhetoric these women choose to use is essential in balancing their roles as politicians and as women. It is even more significant when those poignant moments involve a woman in that position for the first time. All the more reason feminist criticism should be used to identify the influences of rhetoric by examining the historical aspects of language and through exploration of the underlining meaning of given messages. To understand how rhetoric, culture, and resources have historically hindered the advancement of women, it is necessary to consider muted group theory.

### Muted Group Theory

When the very language that a society uses to communicate favors men, women are left as a muted group. According to Cheri Kramarae, "the language of a particular culture does not serve all its speakers equally, for not all speakers contribute in an equal fashion to its formulation" (2004b, p.19). In American culture men have been the individuals who have constructed language just as they have constructed societal rules which both men and women are expected to follow even though women have not been allowed to participate in the formation of either until recently. Through this approach the muted group or substandard group is expected to use a form of language that is constructed by the dominant group. The dominant group constructs language over time that reflects their own views and then proclaims society will use their language as the only language (Kramarae, 2004b). In turn, this subjugates others to the experiences that cannot be described based on the dominant group's language (Kramarae, 2004b). According to Cheri Kramarae, "women are 'inarticulate' because the language they use

is derivative, having been developed largely out of male perception of reality” (2004b, p. 20).

This concept of women lacking the ability to express their experiences was addressed by Betty Friedan (1963) in *The Feminine Mystique*. Many housewives encountered a problem with finding a sense of identity and the inability to specifically articulate what the problem was. One of Friedan's interviews with a married mother of four explored the unnamed problem:

I've tried everything women are supposed to do - hobbies, gardening, pickling, canning, being very social with my neighbors, joining committees, running PTA teas. I can do it all, and I like it, but it doesn't leave you anything to think about - any feeling of who you are. I never had any career ambitions. All I wanted was to get married and have four children. I love the kids and Bob and my home. There's no problem you can even put a name to. But I'm desperate. I begin to feel I have no personality. I'm a server of food and a putter-on of pants and a bedmaker, somebody who can be called on when you want something. But who am I? (1963, p. 64)

The conundrum Friedan faced was the need to express a problem. But without the proper language to effectively communicate the problem women are left with an even more extensive problem. According to Kramarae, "women are a 'muted group' in that some of the perceptions cannot be stated, or at least not easily expressed, in the idiom of the dominant structure" (2004b, p.20). With language primarily constructed by the patriarchal society women are left without the necessary tools to construct personal identity that pertains to themselves rather than that of the dominant culture that restricts the means to articulate such a problem.

Women are faced with constructing their messages through language that had been developed by men to accommodate the needs of men. The needs of women have been of less concern due to the notion of public life and private life. This has great significance in

understanding muted group theory. According to Tronto (2006), private life has been traditionally held for women in which women have been required to tend to domestic duties while men have been reserved to public life which is where legislation and other political decisions have occurred. With women left in the home men have been able to construct a world that favors them while excluding the needs of women. This has left women to construct their messages without the cultural models of feminist expression.

Women have faced the challenges of choosing language to describe the aspects of their lives because like many aspects of society men have been granted access where women have been denied. Men have had access to education much longer than women, which has contributed to the development of language based on the perspective of men. The masculine form of language has been used to describe society as a whole where the feminine form has only been used to describe women. It was through the masculine form of language that defined what women were and what they were not. This only reinforces the belief that since women have been defined by the male standard it is difficult for women to obtain equal status to men. For women to obtain the equal male standard is problematic for the simple fact that a woman is not a man. French feminist Luce Irigaray once wrote,

we need to reinterpret everything concerning the relations between the subject and discourse, the subject and the world, the subject and the cosmic, the microcosmic and the macrocosmic. Everything, beginning with the way in which the subject has always been written in the masculine form, as man, even when it claimed to be universal or neutral.

(1993, p. 6)

The language that society uses is composed by the educated class and in American society the educated class throughout history has been white men. Thus women are left with the very

language constructed by a patriarchal society with which to express themselves. Therefore, it is difficult for women to address themselves through socially constructed language that has only limited the ability to communicate their needs and desires.

The historical construction of language has inhibited the development of language for women to rely on when they choose to run for political office. However, when women break through barriers, and given the opportunity to advocate as leaders, they encounter further difficulties, those of a cultural double bind.

### Double Bind Theory

When women are faced with new opportunities they often face traditional standards that they do not fit into. Women have been defined in relation to men. Men are viewed as the “norm” or standard for others to follow which is an expectation women can never fulfill. When women do try to live up to the standard set by men for men, women face the obstacle of a double standard. The binds are reinforced because people rely on such stereotypes to determine feminine and masculine behavior (Woodall & Fridkin, 2007). This has been the case throughout history where men and women have been viewed in opposite terms. Through these terms stereotypes have developed to determine proper leadership traits (Woodall & Fridkin, 2007). Men have been viewed as strong and independent which translates into the traditional leadership qualities where women are viewed as weak and nurturing. These perceptions translate into gender specific roles both in private and public life. This is especially true in the political system where men are virtually always viewed as candidates but women who run for office are viewed as candidates and mothers or wives but never exclusively as candidates. These double standards have persisted throughout history and remain today.

Kathleen Hall Jamieson describes, “the double bind is a strategy perennially used by those with power against those without” (1995, p. 5). Jamieson goes on to elaborate on the elements of the double bind;

Binds draw their power from their capacity to simplify complexity. Faced with a complicated situation or behavior, the human tendency is to split apart and dichotomize its elements. So we contrast good and bad, strong and weak, for and against, true and false, and in so doing assume that a person can't be both at once-or somewhere in between. Such distinctions are often useful. But when this tendency drives us to see life's options or the choices available to women as polarities and irreconcilable opposites, those differences become troublesome. (1995, p. 5)

Double binds are detrimental to women because women are viewed in relation to men; masculinity being the norm, and as Simone de Beauvoir would refer to women and femininity, as the “other.” Jamieson advances the discussion on double binds by elaborating on the various categories of double binds. The double binds are broken into five categories: womb/brain, silence/shame, sameness/difference, femininity/competence, and aging/invisibility.

Jamieson (1995) explains that the womb/brain bind requires women to choose between exercising their wombs or their brains, but not both. The purpose of the womb/brain bind has been to preserve the dominant male culture by separating men and women into private and public life. Women have been taught to remain in the private life where they maintain the role of homemaker and wife, allowing men to maintain their roles in public life as professionals and leaders within society. Gilligan explains the role women play in society in relation to men,

Women's place in man's life cycle has been that of nurturer, caretaker, and helpmate, the weaver of those networks of relationships on which she in turn relies. But while women

have thus taken care of men, men have, in their theories of psychological development, as in their economic arrangements, tended to assume to devalue that care. (1982, p. 17)

With gender specific roles come specific behaviors that are expected out of women and men.

Women are too often described as nurturers and caregivers which translates into the role of wives, mothers, and caregivers. So much of a woman's identity is linked to her relationships with the men in her life, which makes it difficult for women in roles that are typical of their male counterparts to succeed. Jamieson explains, "the double bind faced by the working mother lies in society's persistence in linking a woman's identity to a man and to the role of mother and homemaker" (1995, p. 61). The identity men hold is not defined in the relationship they have with women or by fatherhood, which allows men more flexibility in society.

Society has taught us that women must choose to exercise the womb by being mothers or exercise the brain and have a career, but to have both is not possible without having an adverse effect on the other. If women choose to have children and a career then society holds the belief that she cannot completely commit herself to her children or her work. According to Carroll,

Women in American society traditionally have been socialized to view different roles as appropriate and acceptable for women and men. They have been taught that a woman's place is in the home, that the man is to be the family's representative in the world outside, and that a woman should place the welfare of her husband and children above any concern she might have with career or work outside the home. Such views are fundamentally inconsistent with active political participation by women. (1994, p.95)

Men on the other hand never have to face this predicament because society has established they are not expected to be caregivers but only providers. This view of the "natural order" has persisted throughout history. It is the belief that women must be better caregivers than

men simply because women are the vessels of reproduction. Jamieson elaborates that “choose marriage and motherhood and society approves. Choose the life of the mind and be punished by man and God” (1995, p.55). This was accomplished by giving women a very limited choice; exercise their wombs or their brains, but not both.

Anderson (2002) explored this “double bind” situation by examining women who have held political positions. The “double bind” notion is the idea that women are always viewed as mothers or caregivers along with their other role(s). Men generally do not receive this type of “double bind” because they are viewed as the leaders or politicians and do not have to be fathers. That expectation is not what society expects from men. It is a type of gender ideology that society has constructed, and is reinforced by institutions of language. Parry-Giles and Blair (2002) describe how gender ideology has constructed the role of first lady in society, and the gradual change of that role. The role of the first lady has been a politically acceptable role for women throughout the history of the United States, and it has allowed the women who have held that role an acceptable space to have a political voice. Since it has been an acceptable role for a woman to hold, first ladies have had the opportunity to gradually shape the role and provide rhetorical models for future women. The roles of women have been changing and the use of language also needs to be altered in order to investigate the development of women in political positions.

For centuries society taught that women and men have very specific roles and within those roles there are behaviors that each must follow. The silence/shame bind is a model of such behaviors because women who speak out are immodest and should be shamed, while women who are silent will be ignored or dismissed (Jamieson, 1995). Such gender roles have been established for women since birth. Campbell described, “no values, however, are more deeply

engrained than those defining ‘masculinity’ and ‘femininity’” (2003, p.77). Historically, one such belief has been that women lack the intelligence to speak properly due to their feminine nature. This false rationale has persisted through society for centuries leading to gender stereotypes that contribute to the double binds women still face today. Women who have spoken out have often not been taken seriously because of stereotypes, which have left women without a voice in the world in which they reside. Essentially, women have been shamed into silence.

Due to the extensive history of stringent gender roles women have been expected to remain silent and when they were able to speak they had to tailor their speech to use a feminine style (Jamieson, 1995). The appropriate feminine style consisted of maintaining ladylike qualities which consist of personal and intimate rhetoric that focused on topics that were considered socially acceptable for women to speak of. Campbell describes rhetorical feminine style perfectly,

In rhetorical terms, performing or enacting femininity has meant adopting a personal or self-disclosing tone (signifying nurturance, intimacy, and domesticity) and assuming a feminine persona, e.g., mother, or an ungendered persona, e.g., mediator or prophet, while speaking. It has meant preferring anecdotal evidence (reflecting women’s experiential learning in contrast to men’s expertise), developing ideas inductively (so the audience thinks that it, not this presumptuous woman, drew the conclusions), and appropriating strategies associated with women - such as domestic metaphors, emotional appeals to motherhood, and the like – and avoiding such “macho” strategies as tough language, confrontation or direct refutations, and any appearance of debating one’s opponents. (1998, p.5)

Essentially, women have been expected to maintain a socially acceptable feminine style which has limitations on how women are allowed to speak in public. A woman's rhetorical feminine style can be difficult to balance in the world of politics when the rhetorical norm is a traditional masculine style.

Women and men have never been measured on equal scales. The sameness/difference bind illustrates that women are subordinate whether they claim to be different from men or the same (Jamieson, 1995). With the established "norm" set by men for men, women have faced the issue of ascertaining their credibility and leadership based on a standard that was developed to exclude women. This is complicated since women can have a difficult time establishing themselves based on the same standards of men because they are not men, but the standards set for women do not allow them to succeed as easily in leadership roles because the "norm" creates obstacles that permit women to be viewed as leaders. Witt, Paget, and Matthews explains, "voters want women to be tough and aggressive as evidence that they can handle political life, but if they are too tough or too aggressive, voters become wary" (1994, p. 13). Walking the fine line between maintaining femininity and traditional leadership characteristics can prove to be incredibly difficult. If a woman candidate is perceived as being too masculine she may be labeled as outspoken, power hungry, or other disparaging terms (Witt, Paget, & Matthews, 1994). Since femininity has been established as an incompetent trait, therefore women must also be incompetent. This leaves women incompetent by the male standard simply because they are not men and incompetent for merely being women.

Women are deemed feminine and based on the fourth bind, feminine/competence, women will be judged incompetent for being feminine, and women who are competent, unfeminine. Jamieson describes, "those who exercised their brains and brawn in public were

thought to be tough, active, analytic, decisive, competent, and masculine; those who exercised their uterus with attendant responsibilities in the private sphere were identified as nurturant, passive, warm, and feminine" (1995, p. 120). The masculine standard has been established to support the role of men in public life; where the feminine standard has been established to do the same for women but in the private life. Based on the feminine/competence bind women face the dilemma of being viewed as feminine for simply being a woman along with establishing competence on standards that have been set by men for men. As Willet, Paget, and Matthews describes, "motherhood may be revered within the family, but it has not been considered an experience or a credential for holding political office" (1994, p. 8). Leadership qualities are described as strong, independent, and control which are based in masculine terms. By establishing leadership qualities in masculine terms only men are able to possess such characteristics, leaving women to be viewed as the opposite. This automatically deems women incompetent because they cannot escape the femininity that is immediately inherited for being a woman. By dichotomizing the two genders men are viewed as the leader and women as the powerless.

Women have limited power in society to begin with but the power women do hold is a false sense of power obtained through femininity. Jamieson's fifth bind, aging/invisibility explains that society views aging differently for men and women. As men age, they gain wisdom and power; as women age, they wrinkle and become superfluous. Aging does not leave men demasculinized or less powerful. On the contrary, as men age they become more senior within their families and communities. Men gain power as they age as Jamieson describes, "powerful men are sexy, sexy women are powerful, and these propositions are not at all the same" (1995, p. 151). Through the aging process men gain power which allows them to be viewed as maintaining

the attraction within society but the same cannot be said about women. Women are viewed as having power when they are attractive. It does not matter if the woman is intelligent, only that she possesses youth and beauty: but a woman's physical beauty fades as she ages. When a woman's femininity begins to fade she takes on new roles in society, such as a grandmother role. Simone de Beauvoir provides a clear explanation how aging affects women in her book *The Second Sex*, "Whereas man grows old gradually, woman is suddenly deprived of her femininity; she is still relatively young when she loses the erotic attractiveness and the fertility which, in the view of society and in her own, provide the justification of her existence and her opportunity for happiness" (1952, p. 575). As a woman's femininity fades so does her purpose in society.

Double binds leave women in an invariable catch-22, which is especially damning for those who choose to run for public office. Through the use of feminist criticism, muted group theory and double bind theory one can understand the limitations women have faced in developing rhetoric to express themselves in a world of patriarchal influence. Each of these approaches work together in order to take into account the unequal differences between men and women that have been attributed to the hierarchy of society (Letherby, 2003). Between the historical occurrences of the time along with the various factors that influence how women construct their messages, feminist criticism, muted group theory and double bind theory sets the stage for exploring how female political leaders developed a rhetorical foundation for future women.

Feminist criticism, muted group theory and double bind theory provide the rational basis for understanding the political rhetorical struggles women have faced and will assist in the progression of this research project. Feminist criticism provides the historical context for the socially constructed barriers women faced in the struggle for equality. Muted group theory

extends the argument from feminists that there has been a lack of rhetorical choices for women to utilize in order to develop a sense of identity outside the private sphere of society. Even though some women have been able to break through some of the social barriers and develop a voice for political leadership they still have experienced struggles with the double standard of being a woman in a traditionally masculine role. It is important to identify those instances to draw further examination. The vice presidential acceptance addresses of Geraldine Ferraro and Sarah Palin serve as two prime examples of women who were the first in political history to deliver such speeches. With the foundation assembled in the above material further examination can occur to understand the challenges each faced in determining their rhetorical choices.

#### Rationale for Analysis

When a rhetorical opportunity occurs for the first time it is steeped in rhetorical significance that opens doors to areas of research that have not been previously available. In the United States political system there have been only two women nominated for the second highest office in the nation: a heartbeat away from the presidency. In 1984 Geraldine Ferraro was the first woman to deliver a vice presidential acceptance address of either party. It would be twenty-four years later that the next woman, Sarah Palin, would be given the same opportunity. Both women worked exceptionally hard through their careers to better serve their communities; with Ferraro ultimately becoming a congresswoman and Palin the governor of Alaska prior to their nominations. Not only did their nominations bring light to the path women take to achieve higher political office but also to the lack of previous examples of women in political leadership. Ferraro and Palin's vice presidential nomination acceptance addresses serve as prime examples of the first time a rhetorical opportunity occurs and provides a window for further rhetorical research.

Both addresses serve to illustrate historical moments that have changed the role women play in society. The addresses serve as rhetorical exemplars that demonstrate the role women have held in society and how such roles have transcended into other roles. Since women have been defined by their relationships with external entities, i.e. norms, laws, etc. (Kohrs Campbell, 2005) women have had to frame rhetorical strategies around their relationships. According to Kohrs Campbell, "rhetorical agency refers to the capacity to act, that is, to have the competence to speak or write in a way that will be recognized or heeded by others in one's community" (2005, p. 3). Since both women have had to rely on the use of language that has been developed to serve men, a study of their rhetoric offers an opportunity to examine how well they created a sense of rhetorical agency in responding to the expectations for office. Women have in turn had to be resourceful in using such language to their benefit. A better understanding of how Ferraro and Palin developed their rhetorical strategies will help future women running for office understand how to use a language that was not designed for them to work in their favor. For this reason it is also important to note that although both speeches are steeped in historical significance neither have been researched extensively. The research that has been conducted around these two candidates primarily focuses on the vice presidential debates, interview, and other forms of campaign rhetoric. The research that has been conducted rarely includes both candidates. This is why it is even more imperative that research around the only two vice presidential nomination acceptance addresses should be researched.

### *Research Questions*

RQ1: What were the similarities and differences in Ferraro and Palin's rhetorical strategies in responding to the vice presidential acceptance address?

RQ2: In what ways did Ferraro and Palin respond to the rhetorical challenge of feminist double binds in their acceptance speeches?

The remainder of the study will address the research questions of the study. The next chapter will explore the progression of Geraldine Ferraro and Sarah Palin's careers prior to their acceptance addresses. The second chapter will also review the rhetorical situations each faced in developing their vice presidential nomination addresses, which will allow a better understanding of the similarities and differences of the historical context for each situation. Since each address can be categorized as campaign oration the third chapter will explore the significance of a genre approach to provide a better understanding of the principles associated with campaign orations. The fourth chapter will provide an analysis of Ferraro's address while the fifth chapter will provide an analysis of Palin's address. The final chapter will conclude by providing drawing the conclusions from the material presented and developing the appropriate responses for the research questions.

### Summary

The initial chapter addresses the historical limitations women have faced in gaining equality in society and specifically in political representation. With such a wide area of research to review this chapter focused on illustrating how three theoretical frameworks, feminist criticism, muted group theory, and double bind theory, work to establish the foundation for understanding the limitations women face when constructing rhetorical strategies when running for political office. With a foundation for understanding the limitations women have faced in society and the exclusion of developing rhetoric and political identity, further examination can take place on two historical political addresses.

## CHAPTER II

### CANDIDATES

Geraldine Ferraro and Sarah Palin are prime examples of women in American politics who were both nominated as the first vice presidential candidates for their respected political parties and faced rhetorical struggles. To examine the rhetorical choices of Ferraro's and Palin's vice presidential addresses a few areas must be considered. First, reviewing the candidates' backgrounds leading up to their nominations will allow for an understanding of each candidate. Then the candidates' challenges will be evaluated based on the five double binds provided through double bind theory. Lastly, the media coverage of each candidate just prior to delivering their addresses will be discussed to understand the gender double binds each candidate faced. The rhetorical choices each candidate made is important for not only understanding the struggles each candidate faced but for the purpose of developing a foundation for future women in politics to evaluate. The choices each candidate made serves as a tool for others that will affect women in the future.

#### Geraldine Ferraro's Candidacy

Being the first woman to achieve in any area is noteworthy but to be the first woman nominated for the Vice Presidency of the United States was truly remarkable. Geraldine Ferraro's notable nomination drew much attention to the differences between the genders in society and within politics.

Ferraro's life is an exemplary of the American dream. Her father was an Italian immigrant who came to America searching for better opportunities (Ferraro, 1985). Her mother was a first generation Italian-American who would raise Ferraro and her brother on her own in the South

Bronx of New York after the unexpected death of Ferraro's father. It was Ferraro's mother who pushed her daughter to get an education which Ferraro did first by receiving a degree in English and becoming a school teacher. Later on, Ferraro took night classes and taught during the day so she could pursue a law degree from Fordham University. Ferraro finished her law degree in 1960 and married John Zaccaro the same year. Ferraro and Zaccaro went on to have three children, Donna, John Jr, and Laura, while Ferraro worked part time and raised her children. It was during this period that Ferraro did pro bono work in family court for women and became a community activist (Ferraro, 1998). In 1974 Ferraro was hired as an assistant prosecuting attorney for Queens County New York and in 1977 was hired to head the Special Victims Bureau. Ferraro ran for Congress and was elected to the United States House of Representatives from New York's 9<sup>th</sup> Congressional District in 1978 (1998). Ferraro exemplified the meaning of the American dream.

Prior to Ferraro's 1984 nomination there was a growing movement in America to include women in politics. The movement was a result of second wave feminism in America which asserted the rights of women and minorities in society. The feminist movement created a paradigm shift where women were able to join the public workforce and also change the standard norms for women in society. There was tremendous pressure on Mondale to pick a woman for the vice presidential candidate from women's groups. For instance, the Gender Gap Action Committee ran an advertisement on July 1, 1984 in *The New York Times Week in Review* that highlighted reasons why Mondale should pick a woman (Frankovic, 1985). The advertisement made such claims, "recent public opinion polls have shown that a majority of Americans want a woman vice-presidential candidate" and "polls show that a woman on the ticket will increase the Mondale vote by a full five percentage points" (Frankovic, 1985, p. 43). The efforts by many

groups were pushing for women to be elected to higher offices. As Ferraro expressed, "politics is a game of numbers. The numbers are in the votes. As many as nine million more women than men were expected to vote in the 1984 presidential election. The gender-gap weapon was growing" (1985, p. 69). Ferraro was correct. Since 1980 every election period has had a greater percentage of women than men register to vote (MacManus, 2010).

During this time women as a voting group had largely been ignored but that was changing. In October 1983 the nonpartisan group, National Organization of Women (NOW), held its national conference and the Democratic presidential candidates were invited to attend (Ferraro, 1985). All but one attended and they were presented with the women's agenda and asked to respond. Women were making sure their voices were heard. According to Ferraro, "with about a quarter of a million members nationally, NOW was an influential power base no candidate could choose to ignore" (p. 68, 1985). Two months after the conference NOW endorsed Mondale for president which the organization had never issued an endorsement in its seventeen year existence (1985). With the endorsement was pressure for a woman to be selected as the vice presidential candidate. Ferraro was selected and she had the momentum of the women's movement behind her but she still faced many obstacles. As the first woman to be nominated as a vice presidential candidate Ferraro faced the obvious challenge of establishing herself as a female candidate.

In 1984 Ferraro experienced Jamieson's double binds when constructing her acceptance address. Jamieson's double binds indicate that society assumes that if a working woman has children her attention will be diverted causing her work or her children to suffer. Although Ferraro and her husband had been balancing their professional and personal life effectively for years Ferraro still faced scrutiny from society and the political media. Ferraro had to address the

issue of balancing her family and political life which diverted her attention away from the issues related to the vice presidency. This was something her male counterpart, George H. W. Bush, did not have to do allowing them to focus on campaign issues while Ferraro was forced to address both.

Women are judged to be incompetent for being feminine, and women who are competent are determined to be unfeminine. The stereotype of the emotional woman still persists in society. According to Shields and MacDowell, "to be 'emotional' is to be out of control; to be 'reasonable' is to remain unswayed by 'mere' emotional urges" (1987, p. 79). Even though the participation of women in politics has increased, women candidates still face the stigma of the emotional woman. To be deemed a competent speaker is to follow a masculine speaking style that relies on "deductive reasoning or arguing from laws, rules or widely accepted principles is a marker of masculine style, as opposed to inductive reasoning or arguing from observation" (Keith, p.25). The prominence of masculinity in political campaigns has become the social norm which only causes femininity to stand out when women run for office (Kahl & Edwards, 2009). For so long femininity was deemed incompetent. Competency has been synonymous with being male. With few women before Ferraro vying for high political office there lacked a foundation for Ferraro to address the obstacles she would face running for the vice presidency.

By the time Ferraro was nominated for the vice presidency she had been a district attorney and an accomplished member of the House of Representatives all the while raising a family. Although Ferraro was an experienced litigator, she had to use caution when relying on the rhetorical style she learned inside the courtroom because the traditional masculine approach in the courtroom would not bode well in front of the general public and cause her to lose credibility (Jamieson, 1988). If Ferraro relied on her rhetorical style as a litigator she may have

been viewed as “bitchy,” “aggressive,” or even “too tough.” As Jamieson (1995) described, “the result supposedly penalizes women who are 'too tough' as well as those who are 'too traditionally female'” (1995, p. 129). In politics, if a woman is “too tough” or “too female” she risks being discredited especially if the woman candidate is the first to hold a high ranking role. Instead, to be viewed as successful Jamieson argues that the woman candidate must balance the masculine and feminine style in their rhetoric. Not too tough but not too soft either.

Society views men and women very differently. This is especially true when looking at men and women in positions of power. More specifically their appearance plays a role in their position of power. Jamieson explains that society views aging differently for men and women and the role aging plays in positions of power (1995). For instance, as men age they do not lose masculinity but instead gain wisdom and power which only elevates men in society because they are viewed as senior members of the community. Women on the other hand have their power tied to their sexuality. As Jamieson describes, “powerful men are sexy, sexy women are powerful, and these propositions are not at all the same” (1995, p. 151). It is assumed that if a woman is attractive and in a position of power then she must have used her good looks to gain a power position. By focusing on the appearance of women it places additional scrutiny on women and distracts from the significant issues. When Ferraro gave her acceptance address at the 1984 Democratic National Convention, news anchor, Tom Brokaw stated, “Geraldine Ferraro, the first woman to be nominated for vice president...size 6!” (Baird, 2008, p. 1). A comment such as Brokaw’s places unnecessary focus on the candidates’ appearance and reinforces the double bind that restricts women. Ferraro could not afford for the public to view her as a sexy woman in power because such assertions would cause her to lose credibility in masculine terms.

Traditionally men were the acceptable gender for public speaking since it was believed that due to the feminine nature of women there was a lack of proper intelligence to speak. Those women who have chosen to speak out were often shamed into silence. Over time women were able to develop strategies adapted to their perceived feminine nature that enabled women to speak publically without being completely socially unacceptable. In Ferraro's book, *Ferraro: My story*, she described a strategy that Mondale used to help Ferraro effectively deliver her rhetoric. According to Ferraro, "he always insisted that I not introduce him, but that someone else should introduce me and then him. 'You are an important candidate,' he would say to me. 'It would be putting you down to have you introduce me to an audience. I don't want to place you in that position'" (p. 189, 1985). Although in Ferraro's situation there was not a threat of being shamed into silence it did contribute to the lack of women speakers before Ferraro, which left Ferraro in a position to be the first woman to be nominated for the vice presidency and judged based on the traditional male standards.

At the time of Ferraro's nomination there was an increase of women in politics but a woman had never been nominated for the vice presidency. Ferraro had to pay particular attention to her acceptance address in order to break away from the stigma of women running for office. Ferraro had particular experiences that were essential in her ability to balance her femininity in the traditional masculine rhetoric. Ferraro describes herself in the book, *Framing a Life: A Family Memoir*, "I had been raised almost entirely in a world of women. The adults who had been my role models of authority and power were the nuns and my mother. Since there had been no strong men in my life to defer to, I had never learned to do so" (p. 98). First, Ferraro had been primarily raised around women and attending an all girl's school run by nuns meant she was never exposed to the gender differences that many children are exposed to early on. This gave

Ferraro the opportunity to develop her own voice without the pressure of the masculine world. Ferraro had also been trained as a litigator which relies heavily on traditional masculine rhetoric consisting of assertive claims based on facts during argumentation. Although Ferraro was able to speak in a masculine style and had extensive experience speaking as a litigator, Ferraro's new challenge as the first woman nominated for the vice presidency was unprecedented. Without models of rhetorical practice for Ferraro to follow she faced the daunting task of adapting her rhetoric in order to balance her femininity and masculine speaking style while combating the stigma of women in politics.

In any profession there are standards that are to be followed in order to establish one self. Based on Jamieson's double binds, women are viewed as less than men whether they claim to be different from men or the same (1995). The standards that have been established in politics have been designed by men for men. The standard characteristics of a politician have been primarily masculine qualities which contradict feminine qualities. When women step into the political spotlight they face the challenge of balancing feminine characteristics along with the traditional masculine political characteristics. Carlin and Winfrey describe, "women who exhibit too many masculine traits are often ridiculed and lose trust because they are going against type or play into male political stereotypes that voters are rejecting" (2009, p. 328). At the time of Ferraro's nomination women in higher political roles were just beginning to take place. Due to the sparse opportunities for women to enter the masculine political arena it greatly limited their ability to shape political dialogue which was a significant challenge Ferraro faced in formulating her own political image (Sullivan, 1989).

Ferraro faced the challenge of establishing herself as a vice presidential candidate based on criteria that she did not fit. If Ferraro attempted to establish herself as the same as her male

counterparts she would be setting herself up for failure since as a woman, the first woman, she did not follow the traditional standards set for the vice president candidate. Ferraro was not the traditional vice presidential candidate which meant she dealt with additional scrutiny. According to Ferraro, "no other candidate in history had ever gone so public with his or her financial affairs. But at the same time, no other candidate had ever had to undergo a siege, both from political opponents and from the press" (p. 167, 1985). Not only were Ferraro's finances scrutinized but her spouse as well. Regardless how Ferraro presented herself she was viewed as being different because she was not a man. Ferraro was challenging the male dominated political arena by accepting the vice presidential nomination. As Sullivan states, "the token challenges the operating assumptions of the dominants and forces them to become more self aware" (p. 332). By doing so, Ferraro was setting the foundation for political rhetoric for not only women but men as well.

Through the examination of Ferraro's case there is a better understanding of the struggles the candidate faced when it came to developing political rhetoric. Ferraro's background leading up to her nomination, the five double binds, and the situational challenges of the campaign contributed to the rhetorical struggles Ferraro faced. Although, Ferraro was the first woman to be nominated as a vice presidential candidate for the Democratic Party it is also important to review the first woman for the Republican Party to be nominated as a vice presidential candidate, Sarah Palin. Both individual's political parties held different political and socially constructed platforms which contributed to their rhetorical choices but both candidates had similarities as well. For instance, Ferraro and Palin were both wives and mothers which could possibly affect their rhetorical choices and possibly be constrained by the double binds.

## Sarah Palin's Candidacy

On September 3, 2008 in Minneapolis-Saint Paul, Minnesota in front of the Republican National Convention, Governor Sarah Palin of Alaska was the second woman in the history of the United States of America and the first woman in the Republican Party to be nominated for the vice presidential candidacy. Palin's nomination came twenty-four years after the first woman, Geraldine Ferraro, was nominated for the country's second highest office. Ferraro began to lay a foundation for women running for higher political office but even twenty-four years later Palin still faced many similar challenges that Ferraro had.

Prior to the 2008 Republican National Convention the nation knew little of Governor Sarah Palin. Palin grew up in the small town of Wasilla, Alaska where she established herself as a competitive star point guard on the high school basketball team and in beauty pageants before moving on to college where she attended five colleges in six years before graduating (Carroll & Dittmar, 2010). Once back in Alaska, Palin worked as a commercial fisher and a sports reporter before she began her political career in 1992. Palin served two terms on the Wasilla city council (1992-96) where she worked to reduce property taxes and redefine the role of government in Wasilla. In 1996 Palin became the city mayor of Wasilla where she served two terms (1996-2002). During Palin's second term as the mayor of Wasilla she served as the President of the Alaska Conference of Mayors (Palin, 2009). Palin ran her first statewide campaign for Lieutenant Governor of Alaska but lost in the primary. Subsequently, Palin was appointed chairwoman of Alaska's Oil and Gas Conservation Commission in 2003 by Governor Frank Murkowski but resigned a year later in protest against what she felt had been a "lack of ethics" on the commission (Palin, 2009). Palin then ran for governor of Alaska. As a candidate she campaigned on an ethics reform platform setting herself as an outsider of the traditional political

establishments. Palin won, making her Alaska's first female governor in 2006 (Palin, 2009). During Palin's governorship the administration focused on energy and ethics reform. Palin was only eighteen months into her governorship before accepting the vice presidential nomination.

As the first woman to run as the vice presidential candidate on the Republican ticket, Palin faced many obstacles when addressing the nation for the first time. From a political stand point, Palin had an uphill battle establishing herself as a politician due to her lack of political notoriety. To add to the difficulties, Palin was running on the Republican ticket, which proved to be a hardship on its own due to the previous administration's unpopularity. Palin's main challenge in addressing the convention and the nation for the first time was constructing rhetoric that balanced her femininity and traditional masculine leadership characteristics. The most significant obstacle Palin endured was her gender.

Running on the Republican ticket had its challenges for McCain and Palin. The Republican predecessor had been President George W. Bush who had substantial setbacks through his presidency contributing to a low approval rating of twenty-nine percent by the time he and his administration left office ([www.gallup.com](http://www.gallup.com)). McCain had to distinguish his campaign from the previous administration. One way of distancing the campaign from the previous administration was by selecting Palin as his running mate which he had hoped would "...emphasize his differences with Bush and the Republican establishment" (Brox & Cassels, p. 354). The McCain campaign had hoped that by picking Palin she would fulfill the campaign's criteria for a vice presidential candidate which according to Brox and Cassels meant,

The nominee had to restore McCain's 'maverick' credentials. The nominee had to help the campaign attract women voters. The nominee had to increase the distance of the

campaign from unpopular President Bush. Finally, and perhaps most important, the nominee had to excite the base of the Republican Party. (2009, p. 352)

They did this by highlighting McCain's voting record and labeling themselves as mavericks. McCain and Palin had to emphasize that throughout McCain's career in the Senate he did not follow the mainstream Republican Party and that although Palin was an unfamiliar face in national politics, she held a track record as a government reformer in her home state of Alaska.

Palin was the second woman to ever be nominated as the vice presidential candidate but it had been twenty-four years since the last woman had been nominated for the position. Over that time many changes had occurred. Bolzendahl and Myers explain what had occurred over the last few decades,

a strong movement for gender equality, the presence of women and especially mothers in the public workforce, shifting demographics of family and parenthood, and more open laws and norms regarding birth control, sexuality, and abortion have all contributed to a dramatic and widespread liberalization of gender role attitudes. (2004, p. 759)

Palin benefited from the movement and it enabled her to achieve her career goals which she may not have had the opportunity to do if not for the women before her who paved the way. By the time Palin ran there had been many women throughout the world that held high political office but there were obstacles women still faced when running for office.

The stigma of the working mother is still present in society. It has often been assumed that the working mother will either neglect her work, her family or both because the demands of each are too great causing the working mother to over extend herself. Palin experienced this double bind first hand while running for mayor when she was told, "you know you'll do fine in the campaign, but you're not going to win because you have three strikes against you. The three

strikes against you are Track, Bristol, and Willow" (Palin, p. 71). As Jamieson describes, "the presumption that women bear responsibility for child rearing and maintenance of the family means that a mother of young children cannot readily appeal to those family values that her presence on the public stages appears to violate" (1988, p. 85). Although there are more working mothers contributing to each additional crack in the glass ceiling, the stigma still remains in areas where women have not been present. This is especially true in roles of public office.

From the start of Palin's campaign, her family became a focal point in the media. Palin is a wife and mother of five children. Palin's youngest child was born with Down's Syndrome and was just months old upon her accepting the nomination. The media deliberated if she could balance the vice presidency and five children, one of which had special needs and as the campaign progressed the public would soon discover Palin's seventeen year old daughter was pregnant as well (Carlin & Winfrey, 2009). Men who run for public office do not face the same scrutiny as women do when it comes to balancing family and career because it is assumed that the male candidate has a wife at home to care for the family. Joe Biden was the vice presidential candidate for the Democratic party and he was not scrutinized for being a husband or father. In the beginning of Biden's career he was a single parent of two young children but did not receive the same scrutiny as women. Women on the other hand are scrutinized for attempting to balance a career and family without any mention of their spouse's role in the matter. Palin faced explaining to the public how she would juggle her large family along with her political responsibilities as the vice president. The double standard sets women up to choose between family and career. When women do choose to have both then society implies that one will suffer due to the woman's focus being diverted to the other.

Palin not only had to consider how to present her family to the public but also to her own political party. Typically, it is the social conservatives on the political right that voice the most criticism against women who run for public office (Carroll & Dittmer, 2010). According to Jamieson, "the presumption that women bear responsibility for child rearing and maintenance of the family means that a mother of young children cannot readily appeal to those family values that her presence on the public stages appears to violate" (1988, p. 85). It appeared Palin was going against the beliefs of her own party by choosing to run for the nation's second highest office while she had five children at home. Carroll explained, "If women candidates maintain traditional sex-role attitudes, they are likely to experience conflict between their behavior and their perceptions of the role of women in society" (1994, p. 95). According to Baird, "in a 2007 Pew survey, 53 percent of Republicans said it was bad for society for mothers of young kids to work outside the home" (2008). In Palin's case, social conservatives were supportive of her role as the vice presidential nominee which contradicted their traditional beliefs (Carroll & Dittmar, p.65). For Palin to prevail she had to demonstrate the balancing act of private and public life flawlessly.

Palin's address needed to balance femininity without deeming her incompetent and competent without deeming her unfeminine. By focusing on subjects such as her family, improving education and children with disabilities, Palin established a feminine role as a mother and caregiver that allowed her to be competent in the eyes of her conservative audience by adopting a feminine rhetorical style. Palin establishes her competence in feminine roles with the hope that her competence will transfer into her role as a candidate. Baird explains, "she works extraordinary hours but appears ordinary, thereby validating all moms and what they do each day and what they might be capable of" (2008, p. 2). Although this would allow Palin to be deemed

competent within traditional feminine roles it also puts her credibility as a vice presidential candidate in question.

Credibility is an essential component in running for office and Palin faced the daunting task of establishing herself as a political candidate despite her lack of notoriety on the national level. The McCain campaign selected Palin as the vice presidential candidate in hopes of attracting supporters of Hillary Clinton who had lost in the Democratic presidential primary but Palin and Clinton held very different platforms (Baird, 2008). According to MacManus, the 2008 campaign clearly illustrated the differences among female voters and exposed "the long simmering debate between conservative and liberal women over just who is a feminist" (2010, 97). Conservative women felt that traditional feminist groups did not represent conservative women or their views, where liberal women felt Palin's form of feminism was not feminism at all (MacManus, 2010). With Palin polarizing women she failed to capture Clinton supporters and given her relatively short period in the governorship it was difficult for her to solely rely on her role as governor to support her credibility as a candidate and attract the much needed women's vote. By applying a feminine style to her rhetoric Palin centered her approach on her personal experiences and relied on McCain's credibility to establish her own competence. By doing so Palin took on a type of marriage as the presidential and vice presidential candidates. McCain had the political credentials and the traditional masculine characteristics, leadership, power, military experience, and assertiveness, where Palin held the traditional feminine characteristics, mother, wife, attractive, and caring (Woodall, Fridkin, & Carle, 2010). By relying on the traditional masculine leadership for credibility it only challenged Palin's credibility further because masculinity is the "norm" in politics and is essentially hidden in society leaving Palin open to fall into the stereotypical feminine roles (Kahl & Edwards, 2009). Palin spoke from a position of the

small town concerned citizen that would appeal to the average citizen which gave her a likability factor but did little to boost her credibility as a vice presidential candidate. Although, the method helped garner Palin support among Republican women it was not effective with Democratic or Independent women voters (MacManus, 2010). On the other hand, Palin's candidacy demonstrated that the traditional all-white-male ticket was no longer an option in attracting voters (MacManus, 2010). Palin's candidacy was also an indication that having a woman on the ticket is not a guarantee to attract women voters.

Nothing occurs in a vacuum. It was essential that Palin's rhetoric was chosen carefully and with great consideration of the rhetorical theme at the convention. Palin's address needed to balance and follow the similar theme as the previous speeches at the Republican National Convention had established. Gibson and Heyse (2010) examined the speeches of the four proceeding speakers, Rudolph Giuliani, Mike Huckabee, Mitt Romney, and Fred Thompson, at the 2008 RNC and found a strong hegemonic masculine tone to all of the speeches. The hegemonic masculine tone reinforced the traditional masculine leadership traits that have served as the pillars in the American political arena for so long. In addition, the hegemonic masculine tone reinforced the Republican Party's long standing patriarchal leadership. Although this message has been common for the Republican Party it would not convey a message that would attract women voters as campaign planners intended.

Vice presidential candidates are chosen on their ability to boost the presidential candidate's electability among the constituents. In choosing a woman as the vice presidential candidate the McCain campaign was looking for an individual who could bring in female voters since Hillary Clinton had lost the Democratic primaries (Carroll, 2010), but they also needed an individual who would be able to revitalize the Republican Party for the 2008 election. In order to

revitalize the Republican Party the McCain campaign needed a woman who demonstrated power. In American society a woman's power is often illustrated through her sexuality. Recall Jamieson's claim that as women age they lose their vitality and their youth which has given them power. Yet, as men age they do not lose their masculinity or power. In fact, as men become more senior within their communities the more power they derive. McCain was a senior Senator who gained a significant amount of influence and power through his years in public services.

Although Palin would have been considered middle aged she appeared attractive and youthful to the American public. Pairing one of the most powerful Senators with a physically attractive woman as a running mate was key to the Republican strategy because the Republican Party needed both individuals to be viewed as having power and influence but they needed a woman candidate that could sway Clinton voters to the Republican side. The Republican Party played off of Palin's appearance even selling campaign buttons stating, "Hottest governor from the coldest state" (Carroll & Dittmar, 2010, p. 71). Although Palin's attractiveness was a strategy for gaining attention it also undermined her candidacy. For instance, the *Daily News* reported, "Former beauty pageant contestant Palin is a head-turner who offers ample opportunities for trouble to a man who expresses appreciation for attractive women in ways that overstep the bounds of political correctness" (as in Carlin & Winfrey, 2009, p. 330). The statement implies that Palin's appearance is the only threat that Joe Biden would face during the debate.

According to Kahl and Edwards,

The sexualization of Palin's persona was further complicated by her own behaviors in a variety of campaign contexts. From her broad winks to the television camera during the vice presidential debate to her hands-on-hips stance during public rallies, Palin projected

an image that, consciously or otherwise, encouraged such biased, gender-based scrutiny.  
(2009, p. 270)

Palin had to construct her rhetoric in a way that balanced feminine and masculine characteristics in order to overcome the double binds that restricted her but her own political party would make that even more challenging.

Palin faced some unique rhetorical challenges during her vice presidential campaign. By examining Palin's background leading up to her nomination and the effects of the five double binds, along with the situational challenges of the campaign it is evident that Palin faced difficult challenges that still plague women in politics. Despite the fact that Palin's rhetorical strategies were quite different from Ferraro, Palin still encountered the constraints of the double binds.

Ferraro and Palin faced similar rhetorical problems and utilized quite different strategies. Both encountered double binds contributing to the notion that women have been expected to maintain the private life where they served as wives, mothers and caregivers, while men held the public life as professionals and leaders. Although times have changed and the majority of women have professional careers along with maintaining their roles as wives and mothers the roots of Jamieson's double binds are still deeply embedded in society. This is especially true with women who choose to run for public office. Women who run for office must select how to present their children and spouse, if they have one or not, to the public. The double binds women face in politics can make it difficult to construct rhetoric in a way that allows the candidate to establish their credibility and focus on the essential aspects of the campaign. Despite Ferraro and Palin's political differences both faced similar struggles in developing rhetoric that would allow them to address the double binds that each faced through their speeches. Through Ferraro and Palin's rhetorical choices each made were extremely important for not only understanding the struggles

each candidate faced but for the purpose of developing a foundation for future women in politics to evaluate.

### Media Coverage of Candidates

Women have gradually become more politically active in recent history yet the media coverage of women in politics has largely remained unchanged (Washburn & Washburn, 2011). Although the media may report that Americans are ready to elect women to governmental positions the coverage also depicts women candidates as an anomaly and in turn the focus of the media coverage of women candidates tends to rely on negative gender stereotypes such as reporting on the women candidates' appearance (Han, 2007). With voters relying on media coverage to provide information about the candidates a CBS Poll from February 2006 found that 92 percent of respondents said they would vote for a qualified woman for president but only 55 percent of respondents felt that the United States was ready for a woman president (Han, 2007). As Han noted, 92 percent of respondents would vote for a *qualified woman* (2007). Yet, what deems a woman candidate qualified? The notion that a woman needs to be *qualified* is problematic since women are faced with the double bind of being judged based on the standards of men. The *qualifications* a woman must meet would require her to challenge the patriarchal system which would in turn deem her incompetent. The media demonstrates the perceived differences between female and male political candidates. According to Kahn, "women candidates receive less coverage than their counterparts, and the coverage they receive is more negative - emphasizing their unlikely chances of victory" (1996, p. 57). This in turn taints voters' perceptions of women candidates while favoring the male candidates. The lack of media coverage may be true in general elections but in the case of Ferraro and Palin this is probably not the case since both candidates received a great deal of coverage for being the first woman of

their respective political parties to be nominated for the vice presidency. Yet, the coverage they did receive was still gender biased.

The media played a significant role in contributing to the double binds that Ferraro and Palin faced. Washburn and Washburn point out, "the mass media are the primary source of the symbolic material out of which people construct their understanding and evaluation of political actors, conditions and events" (2011, p.1028). Media coverage of candidates may vary but when it comes to reporting on women candidates and men candidates the coverage is strikingly different. The media is more likely to center the coverage of a women candidate around their personal life, appearance, and personality (Woodall & Fridkin 2007). When pertaining to male candidates the media tend to focus on the candidates' positions on policies (Woodall & Fridkin 2007). The media coverage of Ferraro and Palin was no exception.

#### *Media Coverage of Ferraro*

The media began reporting on Mondale's vice presidential choice even prior to a candidate was selected. At the time the media was reporting that there was a possibility of protests from the National Organization of Women (NOW) at the convention if a woman was not selected as the vice presidential candidate (Ferraro, 1985). Prior to Ferraro's 1984 vice presidential nomination Ferraro had an active political career. Ferraro had been an assistant prosecuting attorney and served in the United States House of Representatives where Ferraro served on several committees allowing her to be visible at the national level. Ferraro's nomination was announced on July 12th, 1984, just seven days prior to the Democratic National Convention, the media coverage was very active since she was the first woman to be nominated as a vice presidential candidate.

Much like other candidates the media reported on the candidates' political progression toward the nominated position but much of the coverage on Ferraro focused on the historical significance of her nomination which revolved around her gender. ABC News coverage that ran the day of the national convention referred to Ferraro as a "housewife from Queens" (abcnews.com, 1984), which perpetuated the feminine role women play in society. Throughout the ABC News segment there was a focus on Ferraro's gender and the emphasis of Ferraro's historic nomination (1984). In one interview with Lyn Nofzinger, GOP Political Analyst, he referred to Geraldine Ferraro as Mrs. Ferraro instead of Congresswoman Ferraro (abcnews.com). His reference discredited women candidates where their male counterparts would be referred to as their current role and not as Mister.

### *Media Coverage of Palin*

Prior to Palin's 2008 vice presidential nomination little was known about Palin outside of Alaska. The majority of the media coverage on Palin was primary local and state coverage in Alaska. That changed on August 29, 2008 just six days before the Republican National Convention. The surprise nomination of Palin generated a great deal of media coverage for the campaign (Washburn & Washburn, 2011). There was much anticipation around Palin's nomination and the media coverage was extensive since little was known about Palin. The majority of the media coverage Palin had dealt with prior was at the local level in Alaska but that drastically changed after her nomination. Much of the media coverage in those few days revolved around Palin's personal life and credentials. According to MacManus, "in a postelection poll of women (voters and nonvoters), 65 percent of the women surveyed - majorities in every demographic and political group - said that women candidates are held to different standards on the campaign trail" (2010, p. 80). Women candidates face more questions about their family

situation than their male counter parts (Aguiar, 2003). Society assumes that male candidates who are married and have children are not the primary caregivers and that their wives manage the household. One story in particular that was covered in the days prior to the convention was that Palin's teenage daughter was pregnant after reports suggested that Palin's youngest child was not truly her own but her daughter's child (journalism.org, 2008). Such media coverage brought into question how Palin would be able to care for her five children especially when one was an expecting teen mother while juggling the vice presidency. Gender biased media coverage only contributes to crediting women candidates and places their male counterparts with an advantage since it would be highly unlikely that a man in similar circumstances would be scrutinized in the way Palin had been.

The next chapter will explain a genre approach to provide a better understanding of campaign oration before moving on to analyzing each candidates' rhetoric. Once the approach has been established the descriptive analysis of each candidate's rhetorical strategies and opportunities will be provided for Ferraro's 1984 Vice Presidential Acceptance Address and Palin's 2008 Vice Presidential Acceptance Address. Through analyzing the content of each address through descriptive analysis it is hoped to provide a better understanding of the candidates' rhetorical choices and shed light on the research questions.

### Summary

Throughout this chapter the background for each candidate leading up to their nomination was examined to provide historical context for their nomination. This allows a better understanding of the challenges each candidate faced by framing those challenges within the context of Jamieson's double binds. Finally, a look at the unique challenges each candidate faced was examined to have a more complete understanding of the candidates' rhetorical choices.

Understanding these factors will allow for a more thorough evaluation of the candidates' rhetorical choices in the future chapters.

## CHAPTER III

### GENRE

To fully understand the challenges women have faced in developing political rhetoric there must be criteria to conduct an analysis of such discourse. This is especially important but may be difficult when the discourse is a “first” of its kind. To establish such criteria, the discourse should be categorized. Genre criticism provides the foundation for criteria through which discourse is categorized and analyzed. Since this project is geared toward examining the challenges of women in developing political rhetoric the area of campaign oration will be examined as the selected genre. Yet, genre criticism can only provide an understanding of rhetoric based on previous rhetoric and since it has been established that there have been limited examples of women delivering vice presidential nomination addresses the addition of feminist criticism is needed. Since men have created the tradition of acceptance addresses as campaign orations, and the subject of this study is examining how two ground breaking women candidates responded to such constraints, it is necessary to describe a flexible set of rhetorical principles to use in the initial approach to the addresses. Therefore, Aristotelian principles will be discussed as an initial starting point for analysis. The chapter will conclude by examining additional elements of persuasion before the study proceeds.

#### An Overview of Genre Criticism

Within any genre there are rhetorical works from various individuals through a course of time that are all interrelated based on a string of elements. As Campbell and Jamieson describe,

The stars forming a constellation are individuals but they are influenced by each other and by external elements; consequently they move together and remain in a similar relation to each other despite their varying positions over time. Like genres,

constellations are perceived patterns with significance and usefulness - they enable us to see the movements of a group of individual stars and they enable us to understand the interrelated forces in celestial space (2005, p. 412).

Just as in a constellation the rhetoric within a genre is characterized by patterns that develop to accomplish the purpose. Rhetoricians rely on the choices made by previous rhetoricians in determining what rhetorical elements work for a specific purpose and which may not. There has been a considerable deficiency in the amount of political rhetoric for women by women. It is incredibly important to draw attention to women who develop political rhetoric in order to provide future generations with a better understanding of feminine strategies.

To evaluate discourse a critic must have criteria on which to base an evaluation. A genre provides such criteria since a genre is a category of generalizations derived from instances of discourse (Fisher, 1980). According to Burgchardt, "genre criticism must examine multiple speeches or other forms of discourse in order to draw conclusions about categories of rhetoric" (p. 399, 2005). Those conclusions can then be applied to future discourse allowing speakers to convey messages more persuasively. When any sort of an evaluation is conducted criteria for the evaluation must be established prior to the process taking place. In developing such criteria precedents are often times relied upon. Genre criticism is no different.

As in any criticism there are key factors that serve as a foundation. According to Campbell and Jamieson's analysis there are four key constants, classification is justified only by the critical illumination it produces, not by the neatness of a classificatory schema. Generic criticism is taken as a means toward systematic, close textual analysis. A genre is a complex, an amalgam, a constellation of substantive, situational, and stylistic elements. Generic analysis reveals both the

conventions and affinities that a work shares with others; it uncovers the unique elements in the rhetorical act, the particular means by which a genre is individual in a given case (2005, p.407).

The purpose of these key constants are to establish guidelines to serve as a foundation for evaluating genre criticism. With an established rhetorical foundation further expansion of genre criticism can take place. Fisher describes this as, “the true test of a genre, any generalization, is the degree of understanding it provides of phenomena” (1980, 291). Campbell and Jamieson illustrate such test, “this is done through an analysis of structure, imagery, diction, the role of the listener, and the relationship between the audience and the “we” of the Address” (p. 406, 2005). For instance, Ferraro and Palin’s acceptance addresses would illustrate the contrasting approaches men and women take in developing political rhetoric by using such elements in different ways.

Genre criticism is used to illustrate the practices and similarities rhetorical works share within a specific genre. To categorize discourse into a genre is to emphasize the relationship of the given discourse to others within the genre (Fisher, 1980). Such analysis allows for rhetorical discourse to be grouped based on such practices and builds off of one another. Essentially, a genre serves as a pre-determined assessment of discourse (Fisher, 1980). Through the same process the unique elements within a piece of discourse is allowed to stand out and be given the opportunity to shine. As Fisher describes, “all instances of discourse are alike in being discourse and all instances of discourse are different in being the creation of different people in different times and different places” (1980, p. 291).

When a unique rhetorical situation occurs it can be difficult to categorize the discourse that develops out of the situation and can also be problematic when determining criteria for

evaluating the rhetoric. One such category, campaign orations, have historically been delivered by men who have a rhetorical foundation that has been developed specifically for men by men. Ferraro and Palin's acceptance addresses fall within the genre of campaign oration but it might be unrealistic for them as women to follow the same rhetorical strategies as their male predecessors. What set Ferraro and Palin apart from other vice presidential nominees was the rhetorical situation of being the first women in their respective political parties to be nominated for the vice presidential office. When a situation occurs rhetoric can be developed to address the needs of the situation (Bitzer, 2005). Bitzer argues, "it is the situation which calls the discourse into existence" (2005, p. 59). It is significant to recognize such situations as Bitzer elaborates,

(1) Rhetorical discourse comes into existence as a response to a situation, in the same sense that an answer comes into existence in response to a question, or a solution to a problem; (2) a speech is given rhetorical significance by the situation, just as a unit of discourse is given significance as answer or as solution by the question or problem; (3) a rhetorical situation must exist as a necessary condition of rhetorical discourse, just as a question must exist as a necessary condition of an answer; (4) many questions go unanswered and many problems remain unsolved; similarly many rhetorical situations mature and decay without giving birth to rhetorical utterance; (5) a situation is rhetorical insofar as it needs and invites discourse capable of participating with situation and thereby altering its reality; (6) discourse is rhetorical insofar as it functions (or seeks to function) as a fitting response to a situation which needs invites; (7) Finally, the situation controls the rhetorical response in the same sense that the question controls the answer and the problem controls the solution. (2005, p. 61).

By understanding Bitzer's idea of a rhetorical situation Ferraro and Palin's rhetorical choices can be better evaluated. In the case of Ferraro and Palin, their discourse developed out of a historical first for women. This was an incredibly significant rhetorical situation because when women are viewed as the "first" they are instantly regarded as a novice in a history of politics dictated by men (Sheeler & Anderson, 2013). Such discourse can still be categorized into the genre of campaign oration but the challenges they faced set them apart. As Sheeler and Anderson explain, "the difficulty for women is not that they cannot demonstrate strong leadership but that it is more difficult for women to instantiate themselves into a thoroughly masculinized presidential history" (2013, p. 19). It is important to point out that although Ferraro and Palin faced similar rhetorical situations as the first women in their political parties to deliver a vice presidential nomination address their situations were distinctly unique. Each candidate represented opposing political parties that embody different values and their nominations also came at very different times in history. Ferraro's nomination came at a time when the feminist movement was pushing for more women to be representative in political office (Witt, 1994). Palin's nomination was post-feminist movement where society believes the struggles from Ferraro's era may no longer be relevant (Sheeler & Anderson, 2013). This approach simply draws attention to situations that may seem similar but have distinctly different aspects.

Ferraro and Palin's addresses are prime examples of political discourse but what causes them to stand out is the fact that they were the first women in their respected parties to achieve the vice presidential nomination. For this reason it is difficult to classify either speech as campaign oration or feminist rhetoric. As previously discussed, women have been at a disadvantage when running for office. According to Dolan, "voters are supportive of women candidates when all else is equal. But all things are rarely equal in politics" (2005, p. 59).

Women candidates have lacked an equal rhetorical foundation where men have had a long history of previous rhetoric to rely on. Ferraro and Palin's addresses were the first of their kind for women in politics making the classification of the speeches difficult. According to Campbell and Jamieson, "generic analysis is justified if and only if the meaning and the purpose of the work are illuminated by struggling with the evidence to determine the work's best classification" (2005, p. 406). To further the understanding of Ferraro and Palin's addresses it is important to consider campaign oration and feminist rhetoric prior to analyzing the speeches.

In the case of campaign orations, discourse from presidential nominees have usually garnered much attention. Rhetoric from vice presidential nominees have only recently gained attention. Specifically in the case of vice presidential nominee acceptance addresses research is limited. For this very reason the research used primarily reflects that of various forms of discourse that fall within campaign oration.

#### Acceptance Addresses on Campaign Orations

Political acceptance addresses serve several purposes, not only for the candidate but for the respective political party and the audience. According to Smith, "the acceptance address is an important vehicle for consolidating party support, setting forth the candidate's rhetorical agenda, and contrasting it with that of the opposition, all for a large national audience" (2009, p. 49). This is accomplished through the two functions of acceptance speeches. According to Smith, "the first requirement of an acceptance address is that it must unify all factions of the party behind the nominee's leadership of the party coalition. The second requirement is that an acceptance address must establish contrasting visions of the American Dream that frame the general election" (2009, p. 48). It is at this point in the campaign process can be vital to the party and candidate.

Often primary campaigns are aggressively contested toward the very end which allows the acceptance address to serve as the door to closing the primary campaign and beginning the race for the Presidency and Vice Presidency. For those candidates who may not have been widely known to the American public the acceptance address serves as a vital opportunity for the candidate to be introduced to voters and make a lasting impression. This is especially the case for vice presidential nominees since the candidate is typically not as well-known as the presidential nominee. Acceptance addresses serve as an introduction of the candidate to prospective voters. The candidates use their acceptance addresses as an avenue to share political attitudes, beliefs, and values and allows the candidates an opportunity to construct their rhetoric to not only appeal to perspective voters but also to attract fundraisers (Scheele, 1984).

The second function serves to establish the party's platform and illustrate their version of the American Dream. The convention serves as a venue for the candidate to shape rhetoric that will establish the candidate's political platform. One way for the candidate to achieve this is by designing rhetoric that carries on the rhetorical themes that will carry on the candidate's platform to the voters (Scheele, 1984). This can be accomplished through three tactics identified by Benoit and Henson (2009) that candidates use in order to persuade voters:

Acclaims, or self praises, identify the pros of a candidate and increase the candidate's favorability. Attacks, or criticisms of an opponent, identify the cons of an opponent and increase the attacking candidate's net favorability. Defense, which are responses to attacks, refute purported weaknesses of a candidate. (p. 41)

Such tactics serve to appeal to American voters. For women candidates these tactics can be problematic since such tactics are traditionally associated with candidates who are men. By using the same rhetorical strategies as men, women can face unforeseen consequences. Women risk

losing competence as a speaker if the audience views the rhetorical response as ill suited. It is during the acceptance address the candidate is addressing the immediate audience at the respective political party's national convention but also the American people, the prospective voters. According to Benoit, "citizens cast their votes for the candidate who appears preferable on whatever criteria are most important to each voter" (2001, p. 72). Audience members develop criteria for evaluating politicians based on several factors such as; party affiliation, religion, ideology, etc. that shape their value system.

The acceptance addresses of the presidential and vice presidential nominees are very significant given the expectation of reaching a wide audience with the purpose of persuading American voters to vote for a candidate. The only other campaign event to draw a significantly sized audience would be the campaign debates. According to Scheele,

The address attracts perhaps the widest audience of the campaign, and the television exposure before millions of Americans provides the candidate with an unparalleled opportunity to elucidate his philosophy of government, to express his position on relevant issues, and to share his political attitudes, beliefs, and values. (1984, p. 51)

This allows the candidates to reaffirm voter's beliefs and to possibly persuade undecided voters. The conventions are of particular importance since twenty-five percent of the electorate makes the decision which candidate to vote for during the convention (Holbrook, 1996). Such an event is essential to the campaign but these addresses are not considered as important texts of the campaign.

The acceptance addresses can be viewed as a ritual of the political convention and the campaign process which allows the respective political party to set the tone for their campaign and the climate toward the opposition. Through this process candidates propose arguments in

support of their candidacy and platform. According to Benoit and Hansen, "candidates solicit support from citizens by attempting to persuade voters that they are *preferable* to opponents (on the criteria that matter most to individual voters)" (2009, p. 41). The candidates may also offer arguments that may reduce their opponent's appeal to voters. Such carefully constructed arguments are designed to convey a common theme through the campaign. The acceptance addresses serve as a preview for future arguments that will occur in the campaign.

The vice presidency has always been in the shadow of the presidency causing the position to be largely ignored until recent history. With that being said, it is important to note that one of the functions of the vice presidential nominees has been to defend and praise their running mate, the presidential candidate (Benoit & Airne, 2005). With little attention being garnered to the vice presidency there has been limited research into areas of vice presidential rhetoric. All the more reason to evaluate any discourse that may occur within the genre. This is especially significant since in recent history the potential of the vice president moving into the role of the president has drawn much attention. In 1963 President John F. Kennedy was assassinated which elevated Vice President Lyndon Johnson to the role of president (Benoit & Henson, 2009). Ten years later, in 1973 Vice President Spiro Agnew resigned due after pleading no contest to charges of tax evasion which resulted in President Richard Nixon appointing Gerald Ford to fill the vice presidency (Bauman, 2004). Shortly after, President Nixon resigned over potentially facing impeachment resulting in the newly appointed Vice President Ford stepping into the role of president (2004). President Bill Clinton was impeached in 1998 for lying under oath but was not found guilty (Moran, 2001). Once again the possibility of a vice president becoming president was brought to the attention of the American people. The issue would come up again when some feared that assassination attempts would be made on the first African American to be elected to

as the president of the United States, President Barack Obama. With the potential of the vice president moving into the role of president, there is no doubt that vice presidential candidates must be scrutinized carefully.

With limited research surrounding the rhetoric of vice presidential nominees and even less research on women who have been vice presidential nominees it is safe to say that further research would be beneficial. Genre criticism in itself is not sufficient in evaluating discourse. According to Fisher, “genre is an aspect of critical method, not a critical method in and of itself” (1990, 299). Therefore, it is imperative to couple genre criticism with a critical method. Genre identifies elements within a particular form of discourse but it does not illustrate how the discourse performs (Fisher, 1980). Genre criticism identifies the elements within the category of discourse but to truly evaluate the effect of the discourse a theory of communication must also be applied. To properly evaluate the acceptance addresses of Ferraro and Palin genre criticism would best be served with feminist criticism.

When new discourse is introduced into a genre the criteria used to evaluate the discourse may need to be reevaluated to accommodate unique qualities. As in the case of Ferraro and Palin’s acceptance addresses it is imperative to include criteria that draws attention to the struggles women have faced in developing political rhetoric. The criteria for the traditional “great speaker” has been based on the rhetoric of men and revisions need to be made in order to include women rhetors (Dow & Tonn, 1993). As in the case of acceptance addresses there had only been men delivering such addresses. Genre criticism alone is not enough to evaluate the rhetorical significance of Ferraro and Palin's nomination acceptance addresses. Feminist criticism serves to address the challenges women face when developing rhetorical strategies where rhetorical criticism examines the elements within the rhetorical strategy. The inclusion of

feminist criticism serves to identify and evaluate the rhetorical strategies of women candidates based on language that has been constructed through a patriarchal society.

Ferraro and Palin would in all likelihood have difficulty following previous vice president nominees' rhetorical strategies since the previous vice presidential nominees had all been men. Women candidates break the traditional frame of vice presidential nominee rhetoric by using feminine rhetorical strategies creating an alternative paradigm for nominees to follow (Sullivan, 1989). Emphasizing an alternative framework for women candidates can allow women to develop their own foundation and define new rhetorical strategies (Dow & Tonn, 1993). One such rhetorical strategy women have utilized has been feminine style. Feminine style relies on the use of personal narratives, anecdotes, analogies, empathy, and personal tone to promote a connection between the speaker and audience (1993). The use of such strategies illustrate personal experience and self-reflection through the decision making process. Such strategies have developed out of necessity. As Dow and Tonn describe, "women are encouraged to exhibit communicative patterns that correspond to the tasks that women are expected to perform in the private sphere, just as men's communication reflects their primary roles in public life" (1993, p. 288). As more women enter the political arena it is important to understand their rhetorical choices and expand upon the current research.

Previously the example of "good communication" had been defined by men for men, which in turn did not work for women candidates. The rhetorical strategies women have developed over time to accommodate the socially constructed expectations of women speaking in public have led to the development of an alternative paradigm. For this reason it is imperative to study Ferraro and Palin's addresses as they added a new voice to the political arena and shifted the political paradigm for future women. Drawing attention to the rhetorical strategies

women candidates use helps illustrates a different voice and perspective that could otherwise be lost (Sullivan, 1989).

The lack of a rhetorical foundation for women to develop rhetorical strategies is a significant hindrance. There has been an “absence of a legacy” for women since few women have been able to achieve high political office; those who have tried have had limited role models (Gutgold, 2006). It is unrealistic for women who run for high political office to base their rhetoric off their male counterparts. Based on muted group theory the language a society constructs does not equally serve all possible speakers (Kramarea, 1981). This is the case in the area of political rhetoric. Without a precedent of feminine rhetoric to follow it is difficult for women candidates to construct rhetoric that serves them effectively.

Ferraro and Palin were faced with little rhetorical foundation which contributed to the difficulty of developing a sense of agency. Rhetorical agency is the power of language. The power of language had traditionally been held by men. Women were faced with developing socially appropriate approaches as Campbell describes,

Women speakers were expected to reaffirm their womanliness discursively at the same time that they demonstrated the ordinary rhetorical competences - cogent argument, clarity of position, offering compelling evidence, and responding to competing views - that were gender-coded as masculine as well. (1998, p. 4).

The lack of freedom to develop language hindered the power accessible to women. Ferraro and Palin were faced with the challenge of using rhetoric to gain power in order to appeal to voters. Both candidates had to be careful. Carroll explains, "A woman candidate must exhibit a balance of masculine and feminine traits in order to convey an "acceptable" image" (1994, p. 97).

Although, the candidates faced challenges and possible repercussions for their rhetorical choices

they might have chosen to adopt a feminine style to adapt to the unique rhetorical situations that women had not faced before.

In 1984 Ferraro faced developing rhetoric for her vice presidential nomination acceptance address without a rhetorical foundation and based on language that had been developed by men for men. Ferraro was the first woman to give a vice presidential nomination acceptance address. According to Fisher, "there can be no genre including a one of a kind - by definition" (1980, p. 291). At that time there were no other women who had reached that feat other than Ferraro. Without previous rhetoric to compare Ferraro's address to Ferraro faced a truly unique rhetorical situation. Based on muted group theory Ferraro lacked the rhetorical foundation that her male predecessors had. Instead Ferraro's rhetoric had to be tailored to adapt to the rhetorical situation of Ferraro as the first woman to deliver a vice presidential nomination address (Bitzer, 2005). It might have been constraining for Ferraro to use former vice presidential nomination addresses as a guide since all the vice presidential nominees up to that point had all been men. If Ferraro had utilized previous vice presidential rhetoric she would have possibly faced not being able to develop a feminine style for her rhetoric. According to Carroll, "a woman candidate must exhibit a balance of masculine and feminine traits in order to convey an "acceptable" image" (1994, p. 97). For a woman candidate to exhibit overtly traditional masculine characteristics would be in complete contrast to the masculine paradigm which would leave the candidate in a double bind. The rhetorical standards have been clearly different for women and men, leaving Ferraro's address a distinctively new rhetorical situation. Ferraro's address served as one of the first installation of female political leadership.

On the other hand, Palin's vice presidential nomination address could possibly be viewed through analogue criticism because Ferraro's address could possibly serve as a precedent for

Palin. Using previous rhetoric that share similar qualities can be useful in identifying valuable rhetorical strategies. Rosenfeld describes that an analogue approach can be used in the process of comparing discourse in a way that separate pieces of discourse could be used as a reference for one another (1990). The purpose of such an approach is to compare each piece of discourse to the other and use those comparisons as a guide for drawing conclusions.

Even though both speakers faced similar challenges in developing their rhetoric it would not be appropriate to assume that each could serve as a reference for the other. In the case of Ferraro, she did not have previous feminine rhetoric to use as a basis for her discourse and although Ferraro's address was prior to Palin delivering her address it cannot be assumed that Palin relied on Ferraro's choices to establish her own. Ferraro and Palin were from opposing political parties and in reality it makes more sense that Palin would relate to her own ideology as a conservative Republican. It would be more realistic to assume that instead of turning to Ferraro for guidance, Palin turned Ronald Reagan's rhetoric instead of his opponents, Mondale and Ferraro. These two rhetorical acts were distinctly different in the area of female rhetors but the combination of Ferraro and Palin's addresses serve to expand a rhetorical genre that previously did not include women.

The goal in an acceptance address is ultimately to persuade an audience. To understand the effectiveness of the speaker's rhetorical strategies there needs to be an understanding of guiding principles. Neo-aristotelianism provides a straight forward perspective when evaluating a piece of rhetoric on traditional principles and persuasive strategies. This is essential since it is not clear whether genre principles or feminist principles are evident in these speeches prior to the rhetorical analysis; the initial approach to the study requires a flexible set of rhetorical considerations. The primary components of neo-aristotelianism consist of organization, forms of

proof, style, methods of preparation and delivery, and effect (Black, 2005). Such components help critics understand whether the piece was constructed in a manner that set out to achieve its purpose. As Black describes,

the primary and identifying ideas of neo-Aristotelianism that we can find recurring in the critical essays of this school are the classification of rhetorical discourses into forensic, deliberative, and epideictic; the classification of “proofs” or “means of persuasion” into logical, pathetic, and ethical; the assessment of discourse in the categories of invention, arrangement, delivery, and style; and the evaluation of rhetorical discourse in terms of its effects on its immediate audience (2005, p. 47).

The basic understanding of the structure and elements of a piece of discourse allows for critics to evaluate the effectiveness of the persuasiveness of the piece. Neo-aristotelianism relies on the logical progression of an argument but it also relies on the assumption that the logical rationality of the audience (2005). The elements working together build a foundation and natural order of an argument to follow. If these elements are not constructed accordingly the argument will fail to persuade the audience.

Individually the elements appear in various pieces of discourse but what enables a piece of discourse to demonstrate its purpose in a genre is how the elements form patterns as in a constellation (Campbell & Jamieson, 2005). The purpose of the rhetoric is drawn from the rhetorical situation. Ferraro and Palin's addresses were forms of campaign oration which were designed to appeal to American voters in order to gain support for themselves and the presidential candidate.

Genre criticism provides the foundational blocks for categorizing Ferraro and Palin's addresses. Yet, genre criticism cannot solely be relied upon when evaluating these two pieces of

discourse. Feminist criticism adds the backdrop for the evaluation process since it can illustrate the rhetorical challenges women face in developing rhetorical strategies. Through this process two important points are addressed. The first is that there is limited research on vice presidential acceptance addresses. Second, there is even less research on women who have delivered vice presidential acceptance addresses hence perpetuating the challenges women face in developing rhetorical strategies. Through evaluating Ferraro and Palin's rhetorical choices in their vice presidential nomination addresses both areas of research are expanded upon.

The proceeding chapters will examine the rhetorical strategies of Ferraro and Palin's addresses through an analysis of each transcript. The transcripts for Ferraro and Palin's addresses were obtained through the website for *American Rhetoric*, [www.americanrhetoric.com](http://www.americanrhetoric.com). To verify accuracy of each transcript it was reviewed against the audio of the address which was located on the *American Rhetoric* website, [www.americanrhetoric.com](http://www.americanrhetoric.com). No discrepancies were found in the transcripts or the audio of the addresses. The next two chapters offer an analysis of the acceptance addresses of Ferraro and Palin.

### Summary

This chapter has provided an overview of genre criticism to provide an understanding of how rhetoric is categorized. It is important to categorize rhetoric in order to have criteria to use in evaluating future discourse. In the case of Ferraro and Palin both addresses are difficult to categorize since both are "firsts" of their kind. The use of campaign oration genre illustrates the rhetorical strategies that have been established over time, but this is problematic since the rhetoric has been based on standards set by men. Feminist criticism highlights the challenges Ferraro and Palin faced in developing rhetoric as the first women to deliver a vice presidential nomination acceptance address. The additional rhetorical elements discussed help provide a

foundation for developing criteria to evaluate Ferraro and Palin's discourse. The proceeding chapters will provide in depth analysis of Ferraro and Palin's addresses.

## CHAPTER IV

### INVENTING THE FEMALE VICE PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE:

#### AN ANALYSIS OF GERALDINE FERRARO'S 1984 ACCEPTANCE ADDRESS

In previous chapters it has been argued that women's experience has been marginalized in the development of language. The lack of opportunity to develop language that is reflective of a woman's experience makes it difficult for women to address audiences when new rhetorical opportunities occur. When such opportunities do occur for women there are double standards that women face and must address that which had been used to exclude women in the first place. The very language available to women to combat double binds has also been developed by men for men. As discussed previously in muted group theory, the exclusion to the development of language makes it difficult for women to articulate their experience in order to challenge the binds prohibiting women from developing a sense of rhetorical agency. Without a sense of agency women entering the world of politics may face difficulties in developing language that will describe their experience and combat the binds, which is why Ferraro's response to her unique rhetorical situation is important to understand.

There were numerous challenges Ferraro faced in developing her rhetoric for the vice presidential nomination address. Ferraro had to address an audience that had never witnessed a woman as a vice presidential candidate and the audience had been influenced by over 200 years of a patriarchal government and society. Since the purpose of political rhetoric is to appeal to the voting audience it can be problematic for women to develop an effective rhetorical strategy to serve such a purpose for the first time. Ferraro had the additional purpose of her address to introduce voters to the first woman as a vice presidential candidate. When a candidate's

nomination is announced the candidate must face the challenges of establishing their credibility and character for the audience.

This chapter focuses on Ferraro's response to her unique rhetorical situation. First, in order for Ferraro to develop rhetorical agency she had to understand how to develop an effective leadership persona. Second, Ferraro's understanding of the rhetorical purpose provided the analysis that was required to disentangle the rhetorical double binds. In order to pull away from the rhetorical double binds Ferraro relied on the rhetoric of others to gradually develop and enact her own argument. Finally, Ferraro fulfilled the expectations of campaign oration by establishing her leadership credentials and drawing her audience into the fairness of the American dream and ultimately her candidacy.

#### Male Leadership Persona and the Problem of Rhetorical Agency

The power to use language allows women to develop a sense of agency. Without agency women lack the ability to develop their voice and describe their experiences. According to Campbell, "rhetorical agency refers to the capacity to act, that is, to have the competence to speak or write in a way that will be recognized or heeded by others in one's community" (2005, p. 3). The lack of agency is problematic because when women have a rhetorical opportunity their voice is negated from having authority simply because of the gender norms of society. Previously, the rhetorical models that existed in politics were from men. Few women had the opportunity to enter politics since women have traditionally been viewed as inexperienced and incompatible for the public life that politics brings (Dow & Tonn, 1993). Thus, even after a successful career as a teacher and public prosecutor, Ferraro still had to invent a role into which she could step to fulfill the expectations of the occasion.

A speaker's persona conveys characteristics and credibility that are deemed important to the given audience. A speaker's persona will not appeal to every audience member but it is still essential in connecting with the wider audience. Ferraro's persona was an important aspect of her address since she was the first woman to be nominated as a vice presidential candidate. As the first woman to deliver a vice presidential nominee acceptance address Ferraro faced the challenge of conveying the appropriate persona for such a wide and diverse audience as the American voters. Ferraro had to determine how to address an audience who had never witnessed a woman reach such an achievement and balance a once in a life time approach while succumbing to the societal views of women at the time.

From the beginning of Ferraro's address she establishes herself as a hard working American by discussing how she learned to work hard from her immigrant father and hard working mother. The image of the hard working immigrant had the potential to appeal to the audience. Ferraro stated, "If you work hard and play by the rules, you can earn our share of America's blessings. Those are the beliefs I learned from my parents." Ferraro continued by describing how she applied the lessons she learned from her parents, "and those are the beliefs I taught my students as a teacher in the public schools of New York City." She proceeds by describing, "at night, I went to law school. I became an assistant district attorney, and I put my fair share of criminals behind bars." In the very next paragraph Ferraro explained her challenge running for Congress,

when I first ran for congress, all the political experts said a Democrat could not win my home district in Queens. I put my faith in the people and the values that we shared.

Together, we proved the political experts wrong.

The statement reflects Ferraro's dedication to hard work which she has demonstrated from early on based on her statements. This message illustrates Ferraro's image as a hard working American following the American dream that all Americans strive to achieve. She also demonstrates her ability as a woman to overcome barriers without implying that the barriers are unique to her. Through her demonstration of hard work she was illustrating to the audience that her nomination was simply not a novelty. It was through hard work every step of the way that she earned the nomination. Through her achievements she was able to demonstrate her competence which was an essential characteristic for a vice presidential nominee. Establishing her competence by working hard and achieving her goals, Ferraro was combating double binds that women in politics faced. Ferraro demonstrated to the audience that she earned the nomination by means of hard work and not through favoritism, reverse sexism, or by sleeping her way to the top.

Ferraro needed to be careful when she spoke of her achievements because if she emphasized her uniqueness and achievements she risked creating distance between herself and the audience. Instead, her approach was balanced with achievements through the common value of hard work. Ferraro establishes herself as the hardworking American but she also made the point to normalize herself and her running mate, Walter Mondale, with the American people. Ferraro described a trip she took to Mondale's home town where 900 people resided and compared the likeness to her home town of Queens, New York where 2000 people resided on one city block. Ferraro stated, "In Elmore, there are family farms; in Queens, small businesses. But the men and women who run them all take pride in supporting their families through hard work and initiative." Although there are the noticeable differences deep down Ferraro was illustrating how people, regardless of where they are from have the same purpose and values.

Ferraro's strategy created identification between herself and members of her party. Creating a sense of unity for the party members was an essential purpose of campaign orations.

By describing her experiences and personal background Ferraro was building her character for the audience. It was important that she demonstrate her character from the beginning in order to establish herself for voters who have been unfamiliar with who she was. Another important point to make here is that the audience had not witnessed a woman deliver a vice presidential nomination acceptance address and women had only recently had opportunities to move into political roles. Addressing an audience with limited exposure to women delivering political rhetoric posed challenges of long standing gender bias stereotypes of which Ferraro needed to be aware. In Ferraro's autobiography, *Ferraro: My Story*, she reflected on the stereotypes that were placed on her, "To other extremists, I was an Italian-American woman who had stepped out of her traditional role as homemaker, wife, and mother to run for high office" (1985, p. 39). Ferraro had faced gender stereotypes before when she ran for Congress but she also dealt with being stereotyped as an Italian-American with ties to organized crime (Ferraro, 1985). From her previous experience Ferraro knew how she would be portrayed which she kept in mind when she delivered her address. Ferraro needed to convey a positive image for not only herself but for future women who may follow her lead. There is an overarching connection Ferraro attempted to convey to her audience through her depiction of her character as a normal hard working American. This was reinforced through Ferraro's delivery. She had a strong tone in her voice reflecting her training as a litigator, and there is a subtle hint of a New York accent in her speech. The strong clear tone allowed Ferraro's address to flow and sound effortless but it also drew the attention to Ferraro's caring nature which she demonstrated through her rhetoric by praising her parents and talking about her role as a school teacher. Ferraro wanted to convey that

identified with her audience by describing how she shared the same values as the audience and wanted the best for the next generation, "no matter where they live, their future depends on education, and their parents are willing to do their part to make those schools as good as they can be." Throughout the delivery of the address the caring demeanor was noticeable, not in an overtly emotional way but in a professional stoic manner. Ferraro would not have been able to address such rhetorical challenges without a thorough understanding of the purpose of her address.

Since Ferraro did not have previous rhetorical models on which to base her rhetoric she had to use alternative means to build her character for the audience. Using additional rhetorical elements allowed Ferraro to focus on her rhetorical approach. Ferraro relied on the purpose of her address in order to properly construct the intent of her rhetoric but she also had to demonstrate an analysis of her audience in order to execute her address.

#### Rhetorical Purpose and Disentangling Double Binds

As discussed previously campaign orations serve many purposes. The rhetoric delivered at political conventions serve to bring the primary to a close and reunite the party to support the common goal and candidate. But the main purpose of any campaign oration is to appeal to American voters. Ferraro's 1984 vice presidential nomination acceptance address at the Democratic National Convention was no exception. The goal was to get fellow Democrats to vote for the candidates as well as the American people. A task that was only complicated by Ferraro's lack of rhetorical agency.

The Mondale and Ferraro campaign was requesting the audience to entrust the well-being of the nation to them, as the Democratic Party's presidential and vice-presidential candidates. Although, Ferraro did not blatantly state that she and Mondale will achieve specific goals; she

instead, used the word "we" when addressing specific goals. This approach was very inclusive and may have appeared to be insignificant but in reality the smallest details were part of Ferraro's building blocks towards developing rhetorical agency. She was including herself, Mondale, and the American voters into the comprehensive use of "we." Ferraro demonstrated this type of inclusion by stating, "to those working Americans who fear banks, utilities, and large special interests have a lock on the White House, we say: Join us; let's elect the people's President; and let's have government by and for the American people again." Ferraro was engaging her audience in the campaign process and requesting they work with herself and Mondale toward change.

The address also served the purpose to contemplate the future of the United States of America, and honor those who nominated her as the candidate for the vice-presidential position. Ferraro's admiration to the audience is demonstrated throughout her address. From the beginning Ferraro stated,

As I stand before the American people and think of the honor this great convention has bestowed upon me, I recall the words of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., who made America stronger by making America more free. He said, "occasionally in life there are moments which cannot be completely explained by words. Their meaning can only be articulated by the inaudible language of the heart." Tonight is such a moment for me.

Ferraro was demonstrating her deep gratitude for being given the opportunity to be nominated as the vice presidential candidate. The statement was also reflective on the fact that Ferraro did not have access to previous rhetorical models to base her language on. Ferraro literally lacked the words to explain how she felt at that moment toward the American people. Instead, Ferraro relied on the words of another to illustrate her point to the audience. Ferraro went on to accept

the nomination but demonstrated that she was working with the American people toward their common goals and values.

Ferraro's address was unique because there was an additional purpose of establishing herself as a candidate. Although it is common for campaign orations to establish a candidate's credibility, Ferraro's case is different since she was the first woman nominated as a vice presidential candidate. As previously discussed, women candidates face the challenge of establishing themselves as candidates while facing the double binds that society has constructed for women candidates. To make the challenge even more difficult women candidates have to combat such binds without the language needed to fully describe their experiences. One such double bind, womb/brain, explains that women must choose between exercising their wombs or their brains (Jamieson, 1995). In Ferraro's case, she is both a mother and a politician which clearly goes against the double bind. Ferraro addresses this challenge in a very interesting way. In the beginning of her address Ferraro focuses on establishing her credibility and making a connection with her audience. It is not until the very end of her address that Ferraro even alludes to her role as a mother and wife. Ferraro states just before her last sentence,

Tonight, my husband, John, and our three children are in this hall with me. To my daughters, Donna and Laura, and my son, John Junior, I say: My mother did not break faith with me, and I will not break faith with you.

By placing the statement at the end of her address, Ferraro is sending a particular message: being a mother and wife is part of who she is but it is not all she is. Ferraro wanted the audience to see her as a candidate first and personal roles of a mother and wife last. By placing this statement at the end of her address Ferraro is also combating a second double bind, femininity/competence. Jamieson (1995) described that the femininity/competence bind deems women incompetent for

simply being feminine and women who are competent as unfeminine. Ferraro places this statement at the end of her address to focus on establishing her competency throughout her address but also not ignoring her feminine roles as a mother and wife. Essentially, the binds are a catch-22 for woman candidates since their competence is tied to their femininity and gender specific roles. Ferraro was attempting to address these rhetorical challenges without drawing unnecessary attention and maintaining the focus on her intent.

In the end the purpose of political rhetoric is to appeal to the designated audience. In order to effectively appeal to a group of people, it was essential for Ferraro to understand the audience she was addressing. In the case of vice presidential nomination address the targeted audience of the American people is an incredibly diverse group. For Ferraro, a diverse audience who had never witnessed a woman as a vice presidential candidate posed unique challenges. If Ferraro had not understood the purpose of establishing her competence as a candidate or appeal to American voters in her address she would have failed to properly analyze her audience. Without understanding her audience Ferraro would have ultimately failed in developing rhetorical agency.

### Rhetorical Appropriation and Enactment

Vice presidential nominee acceptance addresses have not received much attention. Prior to Ferraro there was a lack of attention and documentation of vice presidential nomination addresses. In fact, between 1973 and 1977 there were two vice presidents that did not deliver nominee acceptance addresses at all because they ascended to the role after their predecessor left the office (Bauman, 2004). Gerald Ford was appointed to the vice presidency after Vice President Spiro Agnew resigned in 1973 and in 1974 Gerald Ford became President after Richard Nixon resigned (Bauman, 2004). Ford then appointed Nelson Rockefeller to the vice

presidency (Bauman, 2004). Since vice presidents have been disregarded in the past it is important to evaluate those candidates that come along to have a better understanding the role plays in the campaign process.

Despite the lack of documentation there have been past vice presidential nominees who have utilized quotations from others to draw attention to their arguments. It is important to note that vice presidential nomination acceptance addresses have only recently been well documented. Prior to Ferraro the examples of vice presidential acceptance addresses were minimal. In Hubert Humphrey's 1964 vice presidential nominee acceptance address he used quotations but only from his running mate, Lyndon B. Johnson. The partial quotations that Humphrey used referred to Johnson's "Let us continue" which Johnson delivered after the assassination of President John F. Kennedy. Although Humphrey was using the statements as a way to urge the audience to rally behind their campaign the use was misguided since he was simply reminding the audience of the death of a popular president. The address has been noted as a poor example of political rhetoric. It can be argued that Ferraro would not have wanted to use Humphrey's nomination address as a model for her own, first because he was male; and second, because it was less than ideal as a campaign oration in reminding the audience of President Kennedy's death.

Since there have been few examples of vice presidential nomination addresses and even fewer examples of addresses using quotations this provides even more reason for a closer look at Ferraro's address and her use of quotations. It is important to evaluate the rhetorical choices of vice presidential candidates since the role has been given an attraction than that of the presidency, and in the case of Ferraro, she brought new attention to the role and to women in political roles. The use of quotations by vice presidential candidates was rather limited but the

use of quotations from a woman vice presidential candidate had never occurred. Any time such rhetorical strategies occur it provides an opportunity for further research into campaign orations.

Speakers often use quotations from other people of importance or relevance to identify with their audience. Burke explained, "the individual person, striving to form himself in accordance with the communicative norms that match the cooperative ways of his society, is by the same token concerned with the rhetoric of identification" (1950, p. 39). By identifying with audience the speaker seeks to illustrate the commonalities between the speaker and audience in order to gain audience support. The use of quotations serve as a strategy to identify with the audience. The words of another speaker may signify an important idea which may be widely repeated and resonate with the audience at that moment due to the historical context. When a past speaker's words live on, such words can have a significant pull on audiences today. These words serve a purpose for future speakers who may use them to apply in a new context to draw comparisons or simply appeal to a given audience where those words would resonate. Quotations are often found in campaign orations because the words of previous politicians can serve to draw connections from the past to the present. Ferraro used three specific quotations to appeal to her audience.

In the very first paragraph of Ferraro's address she uses her first of three quotations. Ferraro quotes Dr. Martin Luther King Jr, "occasionally in life there are moments which cannot be completely explained by words. Their meaning can only be articulated by the inaudible language of the heart." At the very beginning of the address Ferraro expressed her joy and admiration for the American people that nominated her as the vice presidential candidate. Ferraro used this quotation to describe her gratitude and the profound meaning the moment had on her. The use of this quotation is especially important because, as discussed previously, Ferraro faced

the challenge of developing rhetorical agency for her address and the use of another speaker's words to describe her own feelings was just one strategy Ferraro relied on in her effort in the development of agency.

This particular quotation is used in the introduction of the address to draw immediate attention to the comparison between Ferraro and Dr. King. The source of her first quotation is indeed a special source. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was an influential leader in the civil rights movement. He promoted equality and fairness for all American people and still remains a symbol of change in society. Ferraro draws that connection between herself and Dr. King because they both embodied change in society; Dr. King for his work in the civil rights movement and Ferraro as a result of the women's movement. The quotation itself may not directly illustrate an example of social change but the author of the quotation does. A similar social change that Dr. King embodied but for Ferraro she was embodying the change for the advancement of women. Ferraro was illustrating the kind of change she represented but was drawing on the notoriety of Dr. King's status as an agent of social change.

The second quotation Ferraro used is not an actual quotation but an adaptation of a John F. Kennedy quotation. Located in the middle of the address Ferraro acknowledges her nomination as the first of its kind for women and is in the midst of discussing issues of equality when she states, "the issue is not what America can do for women, but what women can do for America." This statement serves as a call to action to the women in the audience in the hope they will continue in the fight for equality and in turn make America a better place. The quotation was another example of Ferraro's development of rhetorical agency because she was using another person's words to send a message. In this case, Ferraro altered the quotation slightly to include

partial ownership in the quotation. The quotation ties her rhetoric on the subject of equality together and allows her to establish her sense of agency a bit more.

Ferraro's adaptation of John F. Kennedy's quotation is significant because the original quotation was very recognizable among American voters. John F. Kennedy's original quotation has been widely used since he delivered the famous inaugural address in 1961. The quotation serves as a piece of American culture that Americans identify with especially Americans of that generation. John F. Kennedy was himself a "first" in his own right. Kennedy was the youngest president and first Catholic to serve as president but even more significant was what Kennedy stood for. Both Kennedy and Dr. King were proponents of the civil rights movement. The original quotation is also from an inaugural address which is important because it is a form of political rhetoric. Ferraro may have used this particular quotation to align herself with two leaders of the civil rights movement but also to associate the beginning of the 1984 campaign with the inauguration of a successful president.

The use of President Kennedy's quotation also serves to reinforce her initial use of Dr. King's quotation to illustrate change. Ferraro was connecting Dr. King and President Kennedy together as pivotal figures in the civil rights movement in order to show that change was occurring and she embodied such change. Having one quotation in the introduction and the other in the body of the address Ferraro was reminding the audience of the element of social change and the impact that these two men had on society. By establishing the connection between Dr. King and President Kennedy, Ferraro was using their voices as a way to build her own. In the case of President Kennedy's quotation, Ferraro feminized the quotation with the concern for women's equality. Typically, this approach does not always work but the original purpose of the quotation was to invoke societal change. This made it acceptable for Ferraro to alter the

quotation because the purpose remained the same. By feminizing the quotation it served an additional purpose of reducing a counter attack from a male candidate. If a male candidate were to object he would have been objecting not only the feminized version of the quotation but the original intent of President Kennedy's quotation. In a sense the quotation served a symbolic purpose. Those who opposed the use of the quotation would have been opposing President Kennedy as well who was widely popular even after his death.

The last quotation Ferraro uses is located at the end of the address. Ferraro does not disclose who originally delivered the quotation but only mentions prior to delivery that "a wise man once said." Ferraro begins to close her address when she states, "every one of us is given the gift of life, and what a strange gift it is. If it is preserved jealously and selfishly, it impoverishes and saddens. But if it is spent for others, it enriches and beautifies." The use of this quotation ties the speech together by emphasizing the need to serve others which can be viewed as a feminine approach but the manner in which Ferraro approaches the subject is not as characteristic as feminine style. With the quotation positioned in the closing of the address, it serves to not only tie the previous quotations and rhetoric together but to place ownership back onto the audience. By identifying the first two speakers Ferraro was clearly establishing a connection from two prominent individuals. The last quotation allows the audience to reflect on the change they are able to create. The quotation also serves to set Mondale and herself apart from their opponents. She was claiming that she and Mondale are there to serve others and thus implying the change she and Mondale could bring to the office.

It is an interesting point to make that the last quotation was from an anonymous man. Without naming the author of the last quotation Ferraro was appropriating ownership of the quotation for herself. Reviewing the quotation it is interesting to notice that the language used is

feminine in nature. For instance, in the beginning of the quotation it states "...given the gift of life..." and at the end states, "...if it is spent for others, it enriches and beautifies" when examined closely the language refers to traditional feminine characteristics. The language sets a feminine tone which allowed Ferraro to easily assert ownership over the quotation regardless of the fact that the author has been mentioned to be a "wise man." By assigning herself ownership over the quotation she was portraying herself as a national candidate by taking over the privilege of the speaker. In doing so, Ferraro was demonstrating her willingness to serve the American voters. Ferraro was also demonstrating a form of an enactment by assigning herself ownership of the anonymous male quotation. Ferraro was placing herself in the role of the speaker and in turn placing herself as a leader, but clearly based on her own terms.

Although, Ferraro stated the speaker of the last quotation was anonymous in truth, he was not anonymous. The author of the quotation was an Italian politician, Ignazio Silone, who was a founding member of the Italian Communist Party in Italy (Wheatcroft, 2009). This is significant because at the time of Ferraro's address the United States was still engaged in the Cold War. If the opposition would have known that Ferraro quoted a Communist leader in her vice-presidential acceptance address it can be assumed that it would have been used against Ferraro.

Through the use of these three specific quotations it is significant to point out Ferraro's progress toward rhetorical ownership and a better sense of agency. In the first quotation, Ferraro used the words of Dr. King to describe her feelings at that moment because in the beginning Ferraro lacked the words needed so she relied on another's words. In the second quotation which was in the middle of the address, Ferraro relied a familiar quotation from President Kennedy but she altered the content slightly to convey a particular message to a particular audience group. In doing so Ferraro was asserting partial ownership over the quotation. In the final quotation at the

end of the address the author is merely described as “a wise man.” Allowing for the final quotation to remain anonymous allowed Ferraro to step into the role of the speaker and assign ownership to herself. The process was subtle and gradual but it served to establish Ferraro as a speaker in the eyes of the audience. Ferraro was enacting the process of change for the audience, from a masculine sense of domination to a feminine sense of appropriation, then to a feminist enactment of the strong female political leader.

### Leadership Credentials and the Theme of Ferraro’s Candidacy

It was not enough for Ferraro to disentangle the double binds and appropriate the role of political advocate for women. She also had to appeal to the values of the Democratic Party and fulfill expectations for demonstrating her qualifications for office. This section of the chapter explains how her speech addressed the expectations of a campaign oration. Campaign oration relies on several elements to appeal to American voters. First, through analyzing the respective audience to understand the expectations of the voting population we can see how Ferraro met the expectations for asserting her role as a leader in the Democratic Party. Secondly, themes are especially significant since themes provide a condensed and continuous message from the speaker to the audience. In essence, a theme serves as a guiding principle that allows the speaker to guide their audience through an address. The theme of an address can also correspond with the rhetoric of the convention which can tie the convention together. By reiterating the rhetorical theme this allows the candidate to align their principles within their address, convention and into the campaign which allows the audience to continuously connect with the candidate throughout the campaign.

Targeting the audience is essential in any political campaign. It was Ferraro's duty to address the audience's needs and effectively gauge the audience's level of expectations. The

whole purpose of campaign oration is to appeal to voters and in order to properly do that Ferraro needed to know her audience in order to develop agency which would allow her to appeal to an audience. Ferraro would have risked losing audience engagement if this was not executed properly which could have lasting effects on a campaign. In Ferraro's case, she had to understand that the audience had never witnessed a woman in the role of a vice presidential candidate. She had to recognize the audience's expectations and address such without previous rhetorical models to follow.

The immediate audience was the people at the Democratic National Convention in San Francisco for the July 19, 1984 acceptance address for Geraldine Ferraro. The majority of the audience was composed of fellow Democratic Party members along with members of the press. The intention of the speech was to address American citizens who were around the nation through the use of the media with the goal of inspiring them to vote for the Democratic nominees. In order to accomplish the intent of her address, Ferraro had to develop rhetoric that would appeal to such a wide audience.

Ferraro's address helped illustrate the role the audience had in the process of establishing leadership of the nation. She did this by addressing the audience as "hard workers" who have the opportunity to work toward change. The audience gained the role of being a member of the active political process. Ferraro also described herself as a "hard worker" throughout her address and described how she worked to accomplish her achievements. By describing the audience as "hard workers" Ferraro was making a subtle connection with her audience. She was connecting herself with the audience but also connecting the audience to her given the previous discussion of how she claimed a legacy of values of hard work for herself and her family. This subtle

strategy allowed Ferraro to build on her sense of agency. Although the small details were important Ferraro also had to be explicit in other areas.

Ferraro made it clear that she was addressing the American people, but she also clearly addressed specific groups. The specific groups she was addressing were hard working middle class people. For instance, she calls onto women to make a difference by standing up for equal pay. Ferraro also addressed older and younger Americans by appealing to issues that are closely related to those groups. Ferraro stated, “it isn’t right that young people today fear that they won’t get the Social Security they paid for, and that older Americans fear that they will lose what they have already earned.” Ferraro also addressed the administration at the time, “to an administration that would savage student loans and education at the dawn of a new technological age, we say: you fit the classic definition of a cynic; you know the price of everything, but the value of nothing.” Although, the administration was not necessarily Ferraro’s intended audience the statement served a purpose for the intended audience. By criticizing the current administration Ferraro was demonstrating to her audience that she could identify the issues that the audience was frustrated with and illustrated that she was capable of addressing such concerns. Portraying the administration as the common "enemy," Ferraro's address provided the Democratic Party and the audience with the purpose of joining together to triumph over their collective enemy.

Ferraro had an entire nation of voters to address. With such a wide demographic Ferraro had to consider her rhetoric very carefully to ensure that she would be able to appeal to the diverse population of American voters. Ferraro made the effort to choose topics that were broad enough that nearly all voters were affected in some way by them. Ferraro also ensured that the level of detail on the topics was not too specific that voters would immediately write her off. Being mindful of her audience and the circumstances allowed Ferraro to address the American

people for the first time as the first woman vice presidential candidate despite the lack of rhetorical models to use as precedent.

Addressing an audience who had never witnessed a woman deliver a vice presidential nomination acceptance address presented challenges for Ferraro. A political system nearly entirely compromised of men promoted a male standard for political rhetoric and leadership. Such a standard helped create the binds that Ferraro faced and provided a rhetorical model that Ferraro did not fit into leaving her with the need to develop a rhetorical model that she would have to forge on her own. As the first woman to deliver a vice presidential acceptance address Ferraro faced establishing her competence for the audience of American voters. Through the use of other speakers' rhetoric Ferraro attempted to draw connections to speakers who had established character in order to demonstrate how her own character related to theirs. Ferraro addressed the problem with the strategic use of appropriating the words of others, first masculine in nature, then ultimately involving a feminine model through the process of appropriation and enactment.

Selecting an effective theme was very important for Ferraro since she needed to appeal to a wide range of American voters. Although, Ferraro's selection of the American dream at first may appear typical for politics the selection of this theme is quite significant. As previously discussed, muted group theory described that women have lacked the ability to describe their experiences in terms that are relevant to themselves. Instead, women have been left with restricted access to language that allows for such expression to occur. This is true for women in politics and in the case of Ferraro. Ferraro already stood out as a candidate since she was the first woman nominated as a vice presidential candidate and the lack of previous rhetorical instances for her to rely on made her decision even more crucial. Ferraro needed the use of a theme that

could accomplish multiple purposes. The American dream had the potential to appeal to all American voters, and if carefully constructed, the ability to tie many of the topics Ferraro included in her address together with the overarching American dream.

The theme of the American dream resonates throughout Ferraro's address. From the very beginning of Ferraro's address she introduces the theme by stating, "I stand before you to proclaim tonight: America is the land where dreams can come true for all of us." The statement illustrates that she is proof the American dream can be achieved and she goes on to extend the dream to the audience. Followed by the introduction Ferraro goes on to describe her background while integrating the American dream into her narrative. She stated,

Tonight, the daughter of working Americans tells all Americans that the future is within our reach, if we're willing to reach it. Tonight, the daughter of an immigrant from Italy has been chosen to run for [Vice] President in the new land my father came to love.

In the statement Ferraro is serving as her own proof of the American dream. She provides the example of her father as an immigrant coming to America to fulfill his dream of becoming an American. Ferraro specifically calls out the theme by stating, "our faith that we can shape a better future is what the American dream is all about" and continues to describe how she obtained the American dream by describing how she worked as a teacher while attending night school in order to obtain her law degree. Through this section Ferraro used the American dream to establish herself as a living example of her argument for the American dream.

Moving forward in Ferraro's address, she uses the theme of the American dream to address various topics. Ferraro addresses the 'rules' of the American dream, "Americans want to live by the same set of rules" further into the address she follows with "if you play by the rules, you deserve a fair day's pay for a fair day's work." Throughout the body of Ferraro's address she

uses the terms "fair," "equal" and "values" to tie various topics back to the American dream. Even though such topics may not necessarily seem to be part of the American dream, Ferraro developed the connection to appeal to her audience. Making such connections to the overarching theme allows the speaker to easily transition to the next topic while easily allowing the speaker to revert back to the theme to reinforce the message and guide the audience along the rhetorical path the speaker has constructed. The themes of dream and success, then, resonate with each other throughout the speech. In this way, Ferraro integrates her lived experience with that of the audience's, and the larger national narrative of an American dream.

The rhetorical path Ferraro developed continues into the closing of her address. She begins the closing by stating, "tonight, we reclaim our dream. We're going to make the rules of American life work fairly for all Americans again." Ferraro is calling out the theme and stating promise of her and Mondale working toward the American dream for all Americans. She is also including the audience by stating "we're going." In the very last paragraph of the address Ferraro closes by reiterating the American dream, "to all the children of America, I say: the generation before ours kept faith with us, and like them, we will pass on to you a stronger, more just America." Once again, Ferraro reiterates the American dream as an avenue to connect the message with her audience and to illustrate the path that she and Mondale are working toward.

Delivering an address at this magnitude meant Ferraro needed to balance her appeals which done effectively allowed her to speak to a diverse audience. Ferraro constructed her appeals in a way that tied integral concepts together that allowed the audience to view the parallels between such concepts. For instance, Ferraro tied her appeals to feminism and fairness together to illustrate how she was a product of the two. Ferraro did this by describing her personal experience for the audience which happened to be a traditional feminist approach. Yet,

Ferraro executed her approach by not overtly speaking through traditional feminine roles but through her experience. By using her personal narrative Ferraro demonstrated how she represented what occurs when fairness exists. Ferraro was the embodiment of her argument that she described through her personal narrative. As a physical example of her argument, Ferraro was communicating to the audience that she was a successful female political leader. In turn, the audience could no longer hold onto long standing sexist beliefs because she fulfilled the standard of a political leader while maintaining her role as a wife and mother.

By now it is clear that Ferraro faced a difficult task of developing and delivering political rhetoric to an audience who was basing the acceptable rhetorical standard on the male standard. To address these challenges Ferraro focused on the purpose of the address and audience to determine which rhetorical elements to use for an effective approach. By drawing on commonalities and addressing the obvious without monopolizing the topics. Ferraro did this by building her character for the audience and establishing her voice by utilizing the words of civil rights leaders to draw connections with her life. Ferraro also used broad appeals through the use of a common theme that would resonate with all voters. Due to the lack of women in politics prior to Ferraro there was a lack of rhetorical agency which would have been instrumental in developing her rhetorical strategy. Instead, Ferraro's address serves to establish a rhetorical foundation for future women could build a sense of agency.

### Summary

The lack of previous rhetorical models did not hamper Ferraro's efforts developing a rhetorical strategy to address the opportunity she was nominated for. The only vice presidential models that Ferraro was given she did not fit into simply because she was a woman and the acceptable qualities for vice presidents were only based on the male standard. The lack of

women in the political arena previous to Ferraro meant there was also a lack of rhetorical agency for her to rely on. To overcome such challenges Ferraro developed her own rhetorical agency by first establishing an effective leadership persona. Second, Ferraro's understanding of the rhetorical purpose provided the analysis that was required to disentangle the rhetorical double binds. In order to pull away from the rhetorical double binds Ferraro relied on the rhetoric of others to gradually develop and enact her own argument. Finally, Ferraro fulfilled the expectations of campaign oration by establishing her leadership credentials and drawing her audience into the fairness of the American dream and ultimately her candidacy. Throughout Ferraro's address she strategically scrutinized all of her rhetorical choices which enabled her to gradually invoke the role of a vice presidential candidate and finally have a sense of rhetorical agency.

CHAPTER V  
A POST-FEMINIST APPROACH:  
AN ANALYSIS OF SARAH PALIN'S 2008 ACCEPTANCE ADDRESS

In 1984 the first woman was nominated as a vice presidential candidate and a rhetorical foundation for women running for higher political office was developed. Yet, progress stalled and it would be another twenty-four years before another woman would be nominated as a vice presidential candidate. In 2008 Governor Sarah Palin of Alaska was nominated as Senator John McCain's vice presidential candidate. Even though Palin had one previous rhetorical model to reference, the model was twenty-four years prior and was developed under different circumstances. In 1984, Geraldine Ferraro's nomination was a development from the women's movement where Palin's nomination reflected post-feminist movement. This is significant since post-feminism argues that women are autonomous agents and disregards the idea of socially constructed gender oppression (Gibson & Heyse, 2014). Since Jamieson's double binds are based on the feminist idea that women have been oppressed through systemic means, it could be assumed that Palin did not base her rhetoric on combating the binds that have restricted women in politics. Another issue to point out, Palin and Ferraro were from opposite political parties, which held different political values. The ideals of post-feminism coincide with the traditional values of self-reliance and personal freedom of the Republican Party (Gibson & Heyse, 2014). Ironically, those values had not traditionally been extended in equal ways to women. Even with a rhetorical model in Ferraro's speech, Palin still faced the challenge developing a sense of agency in a post-feminist society despite whether she realized the challenges or not.

However, this task was made complicated by the fact that her candidacy would also be taken as a threat to conservative values. Conservative values had traditionally viewed political

leadership qualities along gender lines. Traditionally, women had not been viewed as political candidates since leadership qualities aligned with masculine characteristics: tough, aggressive, and assertive (Huddy & Terkildsen, 1993). Thus, Palin's nomination could be seen as a challenge to conservative values. Yet, Palin's nomination occurred in the wake of post-feminist movement, which in ways coincided with conservative values. The rhetorical situation for Palin was complicated. This chapter focuses on Palin's response to her unique rhetorical situation. First, with little recognition outside of Alaska, Palin devoted a significant amount of time to establishing her character through post-feminist rhetoric. Second, Palin focused on connecting with her audience but mainly her conservative Republican audience. Third, through the use of quotations Palin was able to praise her running mate and reinforce her post-feminist persona to connect with her immediate audience. Last, Palin attempted to illustrate McCain and herself as political mavericks by focusing on individual autonomy as the theme. All of these aspects work to build Palin's post-feminist rhetoric in order to appeal to traditional conservative values.

#### Developing Candidate Persona through Traditional Feminine Roles

On September 8, 2008 in Minneapolis - Saint Paul, Minnesota, Alaska Governor Sarah Palin addressed the Republican National Convention. At the time Palin had only been governor of Alaska for eighteen months. With very little recognition outside of Alaska Palin's address devoted a significant amount of her time to establishing her character and credibility for the audience.

As discussed previously, establishing competence and credibility as a candidate is vital in running for political office. It was imperative that Palin establish her competence and credibility as a candidate since she was the second woman to ever be nominated as a vice presidential

candidate. Given the challenges Palin faced she decided to introduce herself as a mother before she introduced herself as a candidate. Palin did so by introducing her children,

Track is the eldest of our five children. In our family, it's two boys and three girls in between – my strong and kind-hearted daughters Bristol, Willow, and Piper. And we were so blessed in April, Todd and I welcomed our littlest one into the world, a perfectly beautiful baby boy named Trig.

Introducing her children first, Palin was establishing her role as a mother including the recent mother of an infant. Palin was providing the audience with a personal narrative in order to appeal to her audience and demonstrate that she was a parent like the majority of voters. The unintended consequence, though, of emphasizing her children was that the audience could easily interpret that five children require a great deal of attention and parenting. This was especially true with an infant with special needs. According to Jamieson's womb/brain bind, women can either exercise their wombs and be mothers or their brains and be professionals (1995). The expectation has been that a woman candidate cannot be a mother and a politician effectively. Palin was establishing her role as a mother and later on in her address she described her political accomplishments. Palin went on to introduce her husband,

And Todd is a story all by himself. He's a lifelong commercial fisherman, and a production operator in the oil fields of Alaska's North Slope, and a proud member of the United Steel Workers' Union, and Todd is a world champion snow machine racer. Throw in his Yup'ik Eskimo ancestry, and it all makes for quite a package. And we met in high school, and two decades and five children later he's still my guy.

By introducing her husband Palin was also establishing herself as a wife. Placing the focus on her roles as a mother and wife, Palin was attempting to introduce herself and her family to the

American public since she was not known outside of Alaska. Palin continued the trend of establishing herself in traditional feminine roles by introducing her parents and herself as their daughter,

My mom and dad worked at the elementary school in our small town. And among the many things I owe them is a simple lesson that I've learned: that this is America, and, every woman can walk through every door of opportunity. And my parents are here tonight. I am so proud to be the daughter of Chuck and Sally Heath.

This description was a strategy for Palin to demonstrate to her audience how far anyone can go with hard work but also how far women have come. Ferraro used a similar strategy as discussed in the previous chapter but the message was delivered differently, which will be discussed further in the last chapter. Palin was normalizing herself to the audience and appealing to conservative values by portraying herself first as a mother, wife, and daughter. Palin's approach through the use of post-feminist rhetoric was a strategy to appeal to conservative values by developing a viable feminist image for conservative women that would adhere to conservative values (Gibson & Heyse, 2014).

Even though her approach to appealing to her audience had good intentions it also had some unexpected consequences. The audience needed to view Palin as a candidate first. Instead, the first message the audience received was regarding Palin's traditional feminine roles of mother, wife, and daughter. In the eye of the audience, Palin was a candidate first. Palin was not going to be the American people's mother, wife, or daughter. Later on in Palin's address she attempts to balance her roles by establishing her competence by describing her accomplishments which she implied she was able to accomplish while raising a family. In that instance, Palin was addressing the womb/brain bind, which states that women can be mothers or professionals but

not both. Palin was demonstrating that she could be a mother and a candidate at the same time but the issue Palin created partially due to her emphasis on her role as a mother. The difficulty in Palin's approach to refuting the double bind claim was that she disregarded the traditional feminist views which were responsible to bringing light to the oppression of women. Palin's post-feminist approach relies on the belief that perceived inequalities can be conquered through individual efforts of determination. As Gibson and Heyse explain, "Palin's rhetoric of individualism assumes an autonomy of self that effectively denies the systemic nature of gender oppression and depoliticizes her own conservative feminism" (2014, p. 104). Since she did not view feminist values as significant Palin relied on the use of post-feminist rhetoric to establish her credibility which she did by spending a significant amount of time focusing on her traditional feminine roles first and her credibility as a candidate second.

The approach Palin took appears to be connected with the organization of her address. By providing her personal background first it allowed her to transition into her description of how she became involved in politics. She explained her path into politics started as a mom who wanted to better children's education by joining the PTA at the local school, which led her entering politics as a councilwoman in a small town. Then on to mayor of her hometown and governor of Alaska. Palin was illustrating that she was just an average mom from a small town who wanted to make a difference. The message served to resonate with the audience to demonstrate that someone who wants to make a difference has the ability to do so. Through post-feminist narratives of individual empowerment Palin was appealing to deeply held cultural beliefs that reward self-reliance and responsibility (Gibson & Heyse, 2014). Palin's approach was directed at the conservative values of her audience and ensuring that she could establish the type of credibility that her Republican audience would expect out of a woman candidate.

From the beginning of the address Palin worked to establish herself as an average citizen from small town America but with a sense of humor. Palin took an interesting approach to developing her own rhetorical agency. Although, Palin established herself based on traditional feminine roles first, she proceeded throughout her address with a sense of humor. After introducing her family Palin began describing her path into politics where she stated, “I was just an average hockey mom, and signed up for the PTA. I love those hockey moms. You know the difference between a hockey mom and a pit bull: lipstick.” Further into the address Palin added, “I got rid of a few things in the governor’s office that I didn’t believe our citizens should have to pay for. That luxury jet was over the top. I put it on eBay.” Both statements portrayed Palin as humorous which was a characteristic that has not been typically associated with women political candidates. The statements were also based on Palin’s traditional feminine role which portrayed Palin as a tough and thrifty hockey mom. Even though Palin relied on building her agency through traditional feminine roles, she took an untraditional approach by incorporating humor and tough rhetoric to appeal to her audience. The use of humor does support the post-feminist approach since Palin was striving to show her individualism, and the comments did allow her to stand out.

Palin's challenge in developing rhetorical agency was complicated by having to fulfill several purposes of the address that traditionally had been done by male candidates. Throughout Palin’s address she incorporated acclaims for herself and McCain along with attacks on the opposition. One of the many purposes of vice presidential candidates is to provide messages of opposition to attack the candidates of the opposing political party. What made Palin’s situation unique was the fact that she took a very hard approach to attacking the opposition, which has not been a traditionally feminine approach. Palin had a rhetorical opportunity and she took a much

different approach than Ferraro in addressing rhetorical challenges. Palin broke away from the traditional feminine style women had historically relied on along with core feminist beliefs to redefine her version of feminism that would align with conservative values. Throughout her address Palin did not view her rhetorical challenges the same as women had in the past. Instead, Palin relied on her conservative beliefs and post-feminist rhetoric to develop agency that she felt would appeal to voters. After Palin had described her path into politics she compared her experience as a mayor to Barack Obama's experience, "I guess a small town mayor is sort of like a community organizer, except that you have actual responsibilities." Palin was attempting to discredit Obama's experience while bolstering her own. By criticizing the work of community organizers Palin was also criticizing a role traditionally held by women. Palin's strategy was to claim the rhetorical opportunity to develop rhetorical agency for herself and for post-feminist conservative values. Palin continued to criticize Obama in the same paragraph by stating,

I might add that in small towns, we don't quite know what to make of a candidate who lavishes praise on working people when they're listening, and then talks about how bitterly they cling to their religion and guns when those people aren't listening.

Palin tossed out the belief that women should use caution when attacking other candidates. Instead, she used her post-feminist narratives to attack Obama's approach on American people by criticizing how he addresses the issues of religion and gun rights, which have been significant political issues for the Republican Party. Palin was appealing to her conservative audience by focusing on topics she knew would appeal to her audience and depicting the opposition in complete contrast to conservative values. The rhetoric was reinforcing her tough hockey mom persona that she displayed throughout her address. She followed the statement up with an acclaim for McCain, who she claimed was always the same man no matter who he was speaking

to. In another instance Palin stated, “but listening to him speak, it’s easy to forget that this is a man who has authored two memoirs but not a single major law or even a reform, not even in the state senate.” Not only did Palin’s attacks serve to set the opposition apart from the McCain and Palin ticket but Palin had specifically set herself apart. Instead of attacking the other vice presidential candidate, Joe Biden, who had been a well-established member of congress, Palin attacked Obama. If Palin could demonstrate that as a vice presidential candidate she was more qualified than Obama then her credibility would be established and he would be disqualified in the eyes of the audience. The criticism of Obama provides a standard of judgment that Palin might not have been able to measure up to herself. Palin’s strategy was a gamble because she was governor for less than two years prior to her nomination and her position as mayor was for a rather small town. By criticizing Obama's competence and comparing her experience to his, Palin was drawing attention to competence which was already in question. In the end, Palin’s credibility and competence as a candidate had not been thoroughly established for the American people because her focus was diverted elsewhere.

### Identifying with a Republican Audience

In many ways, Palin’s address was another "first." Palin was the first Republican woman to be nominated as a vice presidential candidate and even though Ferraro delivered an acceptance address twenty four years prior the memory had faded. Sarah Palin’s strategy of addressing the immediate audience at the Republican National Convention was based on post-feminist rhetoric that would align with traditional Republican beliefs which was demonstrated in various ways throughout her address. Beyond the immediate audience were the media and a new generation of voters who had never witnessed a woman nominated for the vice presidency.

Addressing an audience as diverse as American voters can be difficult. It can become even more difficult when a speaker addresses specific groups of American voters and not others. Doing so requires careful consideration. Throughout Palin's address she spoke to the general audience, "and I pledge to all Americans I will carry myself in this spirit as Vice President of the United States." By addressing the entire audience Palin was demonstrating that she was thinking of all Americans. But throughout her address Palin did address specific attention to certain groups.

Palin relied on personal narratives that were consistent with post-feminist ideas to address groups within her audience. She did address specific groups at times. In one instance, Palin disclosed her youngest son was a child with special needs which she addressed families like hers, to the families of special needs children all across the country, I have a message for you: For years, you've sought to make America a more welcoming place for your sons and daughter. And I pledge to you that if we're elected, you will have a friend and advocate in the White House.

This approach addresses those with needs similar to Palin's own needs. The topic was important to Palin and she draws upon her personal experience to appeal to those who are similar to her. The statement reinforced her feminine role as a mother and advocate, but she tried to balance it out by implying that if elected she would work to help others like her and her family. The attempt in trying to demonstrate the balance between traditional feminine and masculine characteristics has challenges because of Jamieson's double binds. In that instance, Palin was implying that she could maintain the feminine roles she had but at the same time in a traditional masculine position of the vice presidency. Palin was relying on the post-feminist perspective that her individualism brought something unique to the candidacy and she could manage these

expectations. Yet, the sameness/difference bind states that women have a difficult time fulfilling the standard since the standard is set by men for men, and demonstrating the differences automatically disqualifies the woman candidate (Jamieson, 1995). The bind explains that a woman candidate would be disqualified as a candidate automatically since she would not fit within the traditional standard for political candidates. Over emphasizing either side of the bind would deem a woman candidate unqualified and lose the audiences support. As Gibson and Heyse have pointed out, "Palin invokes the experiences of motherhood - providing for the needs of others, raising children, multitasking, and juggling schedules - to anchor her assertion of women's gender differences" (2014, p. 109). This only reinforced the gender binds. Palin was emphasizing her traditional feminine roles to convey that she was the same as her audience but that also demonstrated how different she was from past candidates. Women candidate must balance competing concerns very carefully for the audience.

Another specific group Palin called upon were small business owners. Palin again relied on her personal experience by explaining that her sister and brother-in-law built and opened a service station like many other small business owners. Palin asked the audience,

How are they going to be better off if taxes go up? Or maybe you are trying to keep your job at a plant in Michigan or in Ohio, or you're trying to create jobs from clean coal from Pennsylvania or West Virginia, or you're trying to keep a small farm in the family right here in Minnesota. How are you going to be better off if our opponent adds a massive tax burden to the American economy?

This particular statement was meant to reach out to the blue collar workforce by addressing specific industries throughout various regions of the United States. It was important for Palin to

address the working class in America since the Republican Party needed to be viewed as working for the average American.

There was one specific group Palin was addressing throughout her address even if she did not directly call out the group in the address. Even though Palin was addressing the American people her target was her Republican audience. Palin addressed the Republican audience by addressing specific issues that are aligned with Republican values. Palin's focus on addressing the Republican Party were found in her emphasis on issues such as clean coal, oil drilling, religion and gun ownership rights. But what illustrated her focus on the Republican audience was her approach. Palin adhered to establishing herself in traditional feminine roles which aligned with Republican values and then added a twist with her humorous approach and folksy tone. By delivering a vice presidential acceptance address, Palin was going against the traditional Republican view on women in politics. Through Palin's nomination the Republican party was attempting to appeal to women voters since Hillary Clinton was no longer a concern in the election after losing the Democratic primary to Barack Obama. The Republicans viewed it as an opportunity to change the Republican image and appeal to a group that was not being presented in the election. The belief systems of each party are quite different and the Republicans still wanted to adhere to their conservative values while attempting to attract women voters. Through Palin's post-feminist rhetoric she was trying to redefine what she thought feminism should represent and aligning her "new" feminism to conservative values. Palin's approach would appeal to those within the Republican party since it coincided with the existing belief system, but it did not attract the women voters they were hoping for. Post-feminist rhetoric can be persuasive since it does reflect cultural beliefs that emphasize individualism (Gibson & Heyse, 2014). Yet, Palin's redefinition of feminism undermines the foundation feminism has been based on by

disregarding the systemic oppression of women. The party was attempting to change their image through Palin and needed to demonstrate her ability to hold traditional feminine roles and yet be able to be a political leader. In the end, Palin's post-feminist rhetoric appealed to the Republican party and developed a rhetorical model for future conservative women to use in political campaigns, but it was not feminism in the sense that it would advance women's interest in a coherent way. Palin's rhetorical performance risked turning women voters away.

### Acclaims through Quotations

Quotations are important rhetorical elements that can help develop rhetorical agency through another speaker's words. As previously discussed, Ferraro used quotations in her quest for agency. Since Palin used quotations in her own vice presidential address it is important to understand how each speaker utilized quotations in developing agency. Understanding how Ferraro and Palin used quotations in their development of agency can help further rhetorical research and provide rhetorical models for future women in politics. The similarities and/or differences between Ferraro and Palin's use of quotations will be discussed in the final chapter. In the case of Palin's address there were three quotations used to emphasize three distinct points she made in her address. The first quotation was to connect herself with the audience. The second and third quotations served to provide acclaims for her running mate, John McCain.

In the body of Palin's address there were two quotations. The first was located toward the beginning of the address just after Palin's lengthy introduction of herself. The quotation was from Harry Truman, "we grow good people in our small towns, with honesty, and sincerity, and dignity." Palin had just previously described her small town upbringing and the use of Truman's quotation was to illustrate that she was one of the "good people" from a small town that others could trust. This quotation helped emphasize Palin's description of herself as the average

working mother, wife and daughter who grew up in a small town and worked her way up to achieve her aspirations. The concept of the average small town citizen resonates throughout Palin's address in the effort to appeal to the average voter. Establishing herself as one of them added to the connection Palin attempted to make with the audience.

Throughout Palin's address she provides praise of McCain's accomplishments throughout his career. Palin's second quotation located in the body of the address was from the Democratic Majority Leader Harry Reid stated, "I can't stand John McCain." The quotation served two purposes. The first purpose was to portray McCain as an agent of change or a "maverick." Palin had just previously described how McCain had not been afraid to challenge those in Washington. The intent was to show that McCain was not a Washington insider even though he had served as a state senator since 1987. The second purpose of this particular quotation was to provide distance between McCain and the previous Republican administration. Although, the quotation may not specifically mention the Bush administration it did serve the purpose to distance McCain from the established government. At that time the current Republican administration had very low approval ratings. Palin and McCain needed to distance themselves from the image of an unfavorable Republican party.

Just prior to the closing of the address Palin used a quotation from Tom Moe who was a prisoner of war during the Vietnam War with John McCain. Palin recited, "when McCain shuffled back from torturous interrogations, he would turn toward Moe's door and he'd flash a grin and a thumbs up" --as if to say, "we're going to pull through this." Although this statement was not a direct quotation but more of an account of events from Tom Moe the statement still served to reinforce Palin's previous statements of McCain's credibility and character. The statement portrays McCain as steadfast, heroic and the epitome of the traditional masculine

characteristics all in one person. The purpose was to illustrate that McCain could face anything and win.

From the perspective of being only the second woman to ever deliver a vice presidential nomination acceptance address the selection of these three distinct quotations are very interesting. The first quotation Palin used was to build rapport between herself and the audience. The last two quotes were used to focus on John McCain's character. The purpose of focusing on McCain was to try and reinvent McCain's image and establish Palin's image. Yet, the focus was on McCain and Palin was drawing the connections between herself and McCain for the audience. McCain was an established member of Congress at the time of the campaign which would have allowed Palin to spend less of her address focusing on him.

The American people were unfamiliar with Palin until just a few days prior to the convention. Palin was faced with establishing her credibility and competence as a vice presidential candidate but Palin used an interesting approach in an effort to demonstrate her capabilities. One noticeable method, Palin spent a quite a bit of time providing acclaims for her running mate, John McCain. Through the use of quotations Palin was able to provide acclaims for McCain while introducing supportive rhetoric. Although it is the purpose of vice presidential candidate to provide support for the top of the ballot ticket, Palin provided numerous acclaims. One such acclaim was present in the introduction, "it was just a year ago when all the experts in Washington counted out our nominee because he refused to hedge his commitment to the security of the country he loves." Palin continued, "but the pollsters and the pundits they overlooked just one thing when they wrote him off. They overlooked the caliber of the man himself – the determination, and resolve, and the sheer guts of Senator John McCain." The acclaims are important aspect of political rhetoric. Palin spent a significant amount of time

praising McCain. Ferraro on the other hand did not. When Ferraro did speak of Mondale she included herself to convey the message of a team, but she did not use any quotations as a method of acclaim for Mondale.

### Becoming a Maverick Through the Use of Theme

Although the word "maverick" was only mentioned once in Palin's address it clearly depicted the theme of individual autonomy throughout the address. According to Merriam-Webster a maverick is considered, "an independent individual who does not go along with a group or party." The use of the term, maverick, served as an example to illustrate Palin's claim that Palin and John McCain were political outsiders who had gone against the established political system to bring about what they consider necessary change. The theme of individual autonomy also served to appeal to the audience who were seeking change from the previous administration.

The theme of individualism was used to illustrate both McCain and Palin's political characteristics. Scattered through the address Palin paints McCain as an ardent proponent for what is right for America even when it may not have been popular. In the introduction Palin began by stating,

it was just a year ago when all the experts in Washington counted out our nominee because he refused to hedge his commitment to the security of the country he loves. With their usual certitude, they told us that all was lost - there was no hope for this candidate who said that he would rather lose an election than see his country lose a war.

The statement illustrates McCain's defiance of accepting the expert's opinion and adhering to his convictions. McCain's love for his country and opposition for heeding the expert's illustrated that he would do anything he thought was right as long as it was for the benefit of the country and the

American people. Palin continued later on in the address by stating, "in politics, there are some candidates who use change to promote their careers. And then there are those, like John McCain, who use their careers to promote change." This particular comment Palin was using to illustrate that McCain was enacting their claim that he was an agent of change. Palin was implying that the opposition would be looking out for their personal interests without thought to the people.

Palin continued throughout her address with the theme of individual autonomy by using various examples. Toward the end of the address, Palin quotes Harry Reid as stating, "I can't stand John McCain" which Palin elaborates, "clearly what the Majority Leader was driving at is that he can't stand up to John McCain. And, that is one more reason to take the maverick out of the Senate, put him in the White House." Palin was reinforcing previous messages that McCain stands up for what he feels is right, regardless if those he opposes are in high political positions. The clever language Palin uses throughout her address reflects a sense of competence in her rhetoric by depicting not only her own but McCain's character as well. The approach resonates with her audience and reinforces her use of post-feminist rhetoric.

The theme was primarily focused on the candidates themselves to demonstrate that they represent the change that they felt the audience really needs. Palin applied this to herself throughout the address as well when she stated,

well, I'm not a member of the permanent political establishment. And I learned quickly, these last few days, that if you're not a member in good standing of the Washington elite, then some in the media consider a candidate unqualified for that reason alone. But no, here's a little news flash for those reporters and commentators: I'm not going to Washington to seek their good opinion. I'm going to Washington to serve the people of this great country.

The statement serves to illustrate Palin's individualism and reinforces her tough hockey mom persona for the audience. Palin was demonstrating that she was self-reliant and did not need approval from others to accomplish her goals, which reflected previous statements that she made in her address.

Throughout Palin's address she provided examples of change and at times provided humor with her rhetoric. Palin provided an example of the change she brought while governor of Alaska,

while I was at it, I got rid of a few things in the governor's office that I didn't believe our citizens should have to pay for. That luxury jet was over the top. I put it on eBay. I love to drive myself to work. And I thought we could muddle through without the governor's personal chef, although I've got to admit that sometimes my kids miss her.

The example Palin provided demonstrated her view of luxury items to which the regular citizen did not have access. Palin's perspective provides the audience with an understanding of the level of change Palin was willing to make through the use of her clever rhetoric.

The theme focused primarily on the candidates and the possibilities they would bring to the presidency and vice presidency. Establishing Palin and McCain as "mavericks" helped tie the two unlikely pair together and demonstrated why voters should chose them versus their opponents. Yet, nothing occurs in a vacuum and Palin's address was no exception. Palin's address followed a long line of convention addresses delivered by very prominent Republican leaders. It was through Palin's rhetoric that carried the theme of the previous speaker's rhetoric.

Through Palin's post-feminist rhetoric she attempted to redefine feminism to align with conservative values and provide conservative women a viable rhetorical identity. Instead of attracting women voters as the Republican party had intended, Palin's aggressive tone coupled

with the maternal persona only further reinforced the strong hegemonic masculine tone of the previous speeches and the Republican party's traditional beliefs. The Republican party was attempting to alter their image to set themselves apart as mavericks from the traditional Republican base. Palin's nomination was an effort to demonstrate that the Republican party was moving into the future, which included the involvement of women. Issues developed in the party's efforts to set themselves apart and carry on the theme. What was problematic for the campaign and Palin was how the attacks on Obama were constructed. Giuliani in particular argued that Obama was less qualified than Palin when he compared Obama's experience as a community organizer and state senator as less experience as Palin's experience as a small town mayor and new governor. Giuliani stated later in his address, "she's already had more executive experience than the entire Democratic ticket combined. She's been a mayor. I love that." Giuliani goes on to state in the next paragraph, "as far as I'm concerned, the first day she was a mayor, she had more experience as an executive than Obama and Biden combined. Then she became governor." By comparing the two in order to discredit Obama, Giuliani was in fact discrediting Palin at the same time. Palin reinforced this in her own speech by attacking Obama's role as a community organizer. It appeared that Palin was leading the attack but she was also sending the message that she was demeaning work that had traditionally been done by women. In fact, Palin was only reinforcing Giuliani's previous attack on Obama's role as a community organizer. All four previous convention addresses: Mike Huckabee, Mitt Romney, Rudy Giuliani, and Fred Thompson, relied on traditional masculine leadership qualities to describe McCain and Palin as the presidential and vice presidential nominees. In fact, Fred Thompson made a statement to describe McCain in masculine characteristics, "in flight school in Pensacola, he did drive a Corvette and date a girl who worked in a bar as an exotic dancer under the name of "Marie, the

Flame of Florida." Thompson was illustrating McCain as a rebellious masculine guy who did what he wanted. The statement is brought into this study to demonstrate the type of masculine rhetoric that was delivered at the Republican National Convention prior to Palin's address. The tone was set before Palin reached the stage and through her rhetoric she reinforced the convention's message and the traditional Republican beliefs. Since Palin relied on the post-feminist perspective she did not consider the double binds when developing her rhetoric. As Gibson and Heyse have described Palin's rhetoric, "Palin's post-feminist narrative embraces a hegemonic logic that adamantly denies that patriarchy exists and refuses to acknowledge the ways in which women face gender oppression - is not feminism" (2014, p. 113).

### Summary

Palin faced the challenge of developing rhetorical agency in a post-feminist society with one previous rhetorical model that did not share her political party's values. Palin set herself apart through her rhetoric but she also created some unintended consequences. Ultimately, Palin reinforced the conservative values of the Republican Party traditional. With little recognition outside of Alaska, Palin devoted a significant amount of time to establishing her character through post-feminist rhetoric, which relied heavily on traditional feminine roles. Palin focused on connecting with her audience but mainly her conservative Republican audience. Through the use of quotations Palin was able to praise her running mate and reinforce her post-feminist persona to connect with her immediate audience. This helped Palin identify with the traditional values of the Republican Party and her Republican audience. In addition, Palin attempted to illustrate McCain and herself as political mavericks by focusing on individual autonomy as the theme. In the end, all of these aspects work to build Palin's post-feminist rhetoric in order to appeal to traditional conservative values. This appealed to those who held similar values but

Palin underestimated the stigma women still face when running for office. Despite the advances of women in society stigmas still remain.

## CHAPTER VI

### CONCLUSION, LIMITATIONS, AND QUESTION FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The purpose of this project is to provide the foundation for understanding the struggles women still face in society when developing political rhetorical strategies. From the beginning the project has provided a historical and theoretical background for the study along with an analysis of Ferraro and Palin's vice presidential acceptance addresses. First, this chapter will discuss the differences that Ferraro and Palin encountered and how that shaped their rhetorical responses. Second, the research questions that were proposed from in the beginning of the project will be answered based on the rhetorical analysis. Third, a closer look at the rhetorical significance of each candidate's strategies will be undertaken. Finally, the limitations of the study will be discussed along with proposals for future research.

#### Differences in the Rhetorical Situation Facing the Candidates

On the surface it appeared that Ferraro and Palin shared the same rhetorical situation of women delivering vice presidential acceptance addresses but other than the same fundamental purpose Ferraro and Palin's rhetorical situations had little in common. Exploring the challenges Ferraro and Palin faced provides insight into the rhetorical responses each developed for their unique rhetorical situations. Ferraro was nominated in 1984; twenty four years later, in 2008, Palin was nominated. A lot can change in twenty four years. Ferraro and Palin belonged to separate political parties' which are affiliated with different values which needed to be addressed in order to fulfill the parties expectations of the candidates. Ferraro and Palin also faced different challenges associated with their opponents and the intent of their initial nomination which influenced their rhetorical responses.

Ferraro and Palin's nominations came at very different points in history. During the nineteenth century and early twentieth century the first wave of feminism began as the suffrage movement, which dealt with addressing women's position in society. More specifically the first wave focused on women's right to vote and labor concerns. The second wave of feminism dealt with the social and legal inequalities that women faced. The third wave of feminism is a bit more difficult to define. Third wave feminists benefited from the first and second wave feminists which allowed third wave feminists to expand the idea of feminism to other groups but also criticize the efforts of the second wave feminists (Synder, 2008). In 1984, the feminist movement had shifted from second wave feminist, which was responsible for the women's movement, to the beginning of third wave feminist. Ferraro's nomination came at a time when women were gaining momentum from the women's movement and battling the systemic oppression of women. Although Palin's nomination came during the third wave of feminism Palin fell into a group of their wave feminists known as post-feminists. Post-feminism argues that women are autonomous agents and disregards the idea of socially constructed gender oppression (Gibson & Heyse, 2014). Palin's post-feminist perception viewed the challenges women have faced as individual challenges rather than as the systemic challenges of second wave feminists.

Another significant difference between Ferraro and Palin was their party affiliation. Ferraro belonged to the Democratic Party which is generally associated with liberal values. Democrats are often associated with social equality. Since the Democratic Party is associated with social change and equality it has been the political party that has incorporated women into the US political system. It makes sense that the political party associated with social equality would have the first woman vice presidential candidate. Palin belonged to the Republican Party which has focused on the importance of capitalism in the country while slowly moving toward

the inclusion of women in the fabric of the party. In 1984 The Republican party platform stated, "the Republican Party's vision of America's future, the heart of our 1984 Platform, begins with a basic premise: from freedom comes opportunity; from opportunity comes growth; from growth comes progress." The platform touched on many issues from democracy, security, taxation, economy, etc. but the platform was focused on the America's freedom as the platform title stated, "America's freedom: free and secure." Although, the platform did briefly address equality the primary focus was on America's freedom. It is interesting to point out the 2008 Republican party platform was quite similar which was titled, "defending our nation, supporting our troops, securing peace." The primary focus in 2008 was on defending America's freedom which was similar to the 1984 Republican platform. The 2008 Republican platform also had an interesting statement,

Our platform is presented with enthusiasm and confidence in a vision for the future, but also with genuine humility — humility before God and before a nation of free and independent thinkers. As the party of ideas, rather than a mere coalition of interests, we consider vigorous debate a strength, not a weakness. Indeed, we are a party — as we are a nation —of mavericks.

This statement brings to light the rhetorical choices of Palin and her fellow Republican speakers at the 2008 Republican National Convention. In the last few decades it appears that Republicans have been slow to incorporate social change into the values of their party.

In 1984, Ferraro and Mondale were attempting to win an election against an incumbent, Ronald Reagan and George H.W. Bush. Research has demonstrated that incumbents do have an advantage over their challengers (Mayhew, 2008). Incumbents have name recognition where their competitors have to establish themselves with the audience. Even though Ferraro and

Mondale had previous political success, they did not have the name and face recognition that Reagan and Bush had at their advantage. During the 1984 campaign it was obvious that Ferraro stood out from the other candidates because she was the only woman candidate, which was important because at that time Ferraro needed to minimize how much she stood out in the campaign. The public needed to view Ferraro as a viable candidate and not only a novelty.

On the other hand, Palin was not running against an incumbent but she was running against the first African American Presidential candidate, Barack Obama. This was important because the media focused on the historical moment and the need to stand out to American voters was needed in such a unique political situation. Never had an African American and a woman been candidates in the same presidential and vice presidential election. This added additional challenges since Palin's own party members were comparing her qualifications to Obama's in an attempt to discredit him during the convention addresses. Despite the fact that Obama and Palin were not running for the same position they were consistently compared. It is important to point out that Obama had won a very close primary against Hillary Clinton, who drew a lot of support from groups of women. In some ways, Palin was being compared to Clinton and Obama even though Clinton was not a candidate and Obama was on the top of the Democratic ticket and Palin was on the bottom of the Republican ticket. Palin was placed in a difficult situation which is why it is difficult to conclude whether Palin's rhetorical response was appropriate. Palin did not hold to traditional feminist beliefs or combat the double binds but she never intended to. The goal for Palin was to shape her own version of feminism that adhered to conservative Republican values in order to appeal to her political party, which she did accomplish. Palin's additional goal was to ensure her acceptance address functioned to serve the purpose of an acceptance address, which was accomplished as well. At the convention the

address was very well received, unifying the Republican Party. Palin reinforced the campaign platform while serving as a supportive role to McCain. From a functional perspective Palin's address served its purpose but from a traditional feminist perspective it did not.

Even though Ferraro and Palin were faced with the same rhetorical challenge of being the first women in their respective parties to deliver vice presidential acceptance addresses both candidates faced unique external situations. It was not surprising that each candidate approached their situations very differently considering the stark differences they faced during their nomination. Understanding the unique situations Ferraro and Palin faced when developing their rhetorical strategies will assist in the further analysis of research questions.

## Research Questions

### *Research Question One*

RQ 1: What were the similarities and differences in Ferraro and Palin's rhetorical strategies in responding to the vice presidential acceptance address?

The similarities between Ferraro and Palin's rhetorical strategies in responding to their vice presidential addresses were based on the elements they chose to focus on. Each candidate knew they needed to develop a sense of agency which they did by relying on the use of appeals, rhetorical elements and establishing their political credentials. Ferraro and Palin used some of the same rhetorical strategies but in different ways.

Both candidates used a theme throughout their addresses to appeal to their respected audience. Ferraro conveyed the message of the American dream to connect with her audience. The use of the American dream as a theme was appropriate for Ferraro given at the time of her nomination she needed to minimize her differences in order to appeal to a diverse audience. On the other hand, Palin relied on setting herself apart from the established government stressing the

importance of individualism as the theme, which she did through the use of the political maverick. Even though Palin was not explicit with the theme it was implied because she applied it to McCain and herself through the use of narratives. This strategy also served to draw comparisons between herself and McCain. The purpose was to illustrate that she and McCain were willing to make changes when she stated, "I'm going to Washington to serve the people of this great country. Americans expect us to go to Washington for the right reason, and not just to mingle with the right people." In Palin's situation she needed to set herself apart from the previous Republican administration. Both themes resonated with their immediate audiences at that given time.

In order to appeal to their audiences Ferraro and Palin described coming from hard working American families. Although, Ferraro and Palin's experiences were vastly different, they both described learning from their hard working families to gain success. Ferraro discussed being the daughter of an immigrant and working hard for the American dream. Palin used a similar appeal when she described how she learned from growing up in a small town with her hard working parents. Both appeals drew on the concept of the average hard working family but each used the appeal to describe their unique situation.

One important similarity between Ferraro and Palin's addresses was that they both made a point to comment on the impact their nomination would have. When significant rhetorical moments occur the speaker typically makes a point to comment on the significance of the moment. Ferraro and Palin did this in similar statements with a slight variation. In Ferraro's address she stated,

by choosing a woman to run for our nation's second highest office, you send a powerful signal to all Americans: there are no doors we cannot unlock. We will place no limits on achievement. If we can do this, we can do anything.

Ferraro was conveying to her audience that the moment was significant in the advancement for women and of the nation. Acknowledging the significance of the moment would be expected.

Palin made a similar statement,

my mom and dad worked at the elementary school in our small town. And among the many things I owe them is a simple lesson that I've learned: that this is America, and every woman can walk through every door of opportunity.

In both statements Ferraro and Palin were demonstrating the advancement of women and the part the nation has played in the nomination. The issue with both statements is the last portion of the statements. Ferraro was acknowledging unlocking the door to opportunity and Palin was demonstrating walking through the door of opportunity, which may seem insignificant but what occurred was that the statements could be interpreted as achieving success. There was mild success in gaining the nomination but they had not won the election. There needed to be a rhetorical balance. To claim the nomination as a victory could have been portrayed that women had finally achieved political success. In a sense the success was short lived because both were nominated but neither won. Yet, not addressing the significance of their nomination would have appeared awkward. After all, both situations were significant moments for women and the nation. The candidates needed to make sure the topic was addressed without making additional claims that woman accomplished ultimate success. Palin began to do that by stating, "every woman can walk through every door of opportunity." Two women in the history of the United States history is not representative of every woman.

Change was an important concept to each of the candidates which they both emphasized through the use of chiasmus. Chiasmus describes when the order of words is reversed to balance a phrase (Wiseman, 2009). The purpose of using chiasmus in political rhetoric is to draw emphasize a phrase or statement for the audience. Ferraro and Palin both used chiasmus in their addresses to highlight an important statement. Ferraro stated, "the issue is not what America can do for women, but what women can do for America." Ferraro's use of chiasmus was to rely on the credibility of the original speaker to build her own, but also to highlight the role women could play in changing America. Palin also used chiasmus in her speech when she stated, "in politics, there are some candidates who use change to promote their careers. And then there are those, like John McCain, who use their careers to promote change." The statement illustrated that McCain was enacting her claim that he was an agent of change. Each of the statements served to identify who the agent of change truly was for the audience.

An additional rhetorical element each candidate used was the use of quotations. As discussed previously, quotations can serve many functions. Ferraro used three specific quotations to serve two particular purposes. First, Ferraro used the three quotations to identify with her audience. Ferraro accomplished this by selecting the first two quotes from two influential civil rights leaders, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and former President John F. Kennedy. Ferraro's second purpose of using quotations was to slowly assume the role of the speaker which she accomplished through the use of the first two quotations from famous leaders and solidified at the end of her speech by using a quote from an anonymous speaker. Through the anonymous speaker Ferraro was able to assume the role of the speaker and develop a sense of agency.

Palin also used quotations to identify with her audience and support her claims about McCain. The quotation Palin used served to support her claim of being a regular small town

American, which was from Harry Truman, "we grow good people in our small towns, with honesty, and sincerity, and dignity." The two additional quotations Palin used were all in support of McCain's character and reinforced the message that McCain was a maverick. Both Ferraro and Palin used quotations to identify with their audiences but Palin used her quotations to support her claims for McCain, where Ferraro's additional purpose was to assume the role of the speaker.

In the end, Ferraro and Palin's function of their addresses were similar in the fact that both used certain rhetorical elements but their strategies were quite different. Both needed to appeal to their audience by drawing similarities between themselves and the audience. Ferraro and Palin were able to accomplish this through the use of a theme in their address. The themes were different and applied using different strategies but the purpose was the same. Palin and Ferraro also expressed the significance of their nomination and gratitude for the audience but the way they used the elements to convey their messages were very different. In fact, the differences in the addresses outweighed the similarities.

### *Research Question Two*

RQ 2: In what ways did Ferraro and Palin respond to the rhetorical challenge of feminist double binds in their acceptance speeches?

Ferraro's approach to challenging the feminist double binds was very interesting because her approach was a process that gradually developed as her address progressed. Ferraro's focus was on developing into the owner of her rhetoric and assuming the role of speaker. Since women have been excluded from developing rhetoric and owning the role as speaker, Ferraro's process allowed her to subtly move past the feminist double binds and assume the role as the speaker. One strategy Ferraro took was to ensure she primarily focused on establishing her vice

presidential credentials without overtly addressing traditional feminine roles. Ferraro did not acknowledge her role as a mother or wife until the very end of her address when she thanked her family. By leaving the acknowledgement of her traditional feminist roles at the end of her address Ferraro was ensuring that her audience was focused on image as a vice presidential candidate first.

Palin's approach to challenging the feminist double binds was much different than Ferraro's. The rhetoric in Palin's address was reflective of post-feminist beliefs which is an indication that Palin did not view the double binds as a concern. Instead, Palin choose to establish herself in traditional feminine roles before she established herself as a vice presidential candidate. Whether Palin intended to or not the message she sent to her audience was that she could be a mother, wife, and daughter and still be a viable political candidate. This approach coincided with Palin's attempt to redefine feminism that aligned with conservative values of her party and provided a rhetorical identity for conservative women. The issue with this message was that traditional feminine roles have not served as political leadership credentials, which the double binds reinforced. Although, Palin was attempting to reclaim and establish traditional feminine roles as a form of political qualifications, she reinforced traditional Republican values. Through her approach Palin did what she intended but with unintended consequences. In a post-feminist society Palin's approach was effective with her immediate audience who shared similar conservative values but it also reinforced the double binds in significant ways. Simply by identifying herself with traditional feminine roles first, Palin brought women back to their traditional roles in the private sphere where they began. Palin wanted the audience to view her as a mother, wife and daughter before they could consider her as a candidate. Ironically, this is how society viewed women during the first and second waves of feminism, which created the double

binds to begin with. Without realizing it Palin shifted the image of women back in time for the audience. Palin's approach of establishing a feminist identity for conservative values was simply a façade. It does not matter how much lipstick Palin tried to put on conservative values and it feminism, her approach reflected still conservative values. This, in turn, further alienated those who did not share her values and did not gain the support of women voters that the Republican party had hoped. Palin's approach only reinforced the conservative values of the Republican party.

After viewing Ferraro and Plain's addresses it was apparent that Ferraro was attempting to combat the double binds. Palin, on the other hand, did not consider the challenges women have faced throughout the nation's history and the implications that remain today. At this point, the delivery style of each was appropriate for the immediate audience but the content of the addresses seems to be the real issue. Ferraro managed to walk the fine line that women in politics often have to follow. Ferraro was able to balance the content and her approach of delivering her message effectively for that given point in time. Over the years, women have gained some ground in acceptable delivery methods. Palin's aggressive tone and sense of humor appear to have benefited her delivery but the issue that Plain had was the construction of her message. Although, her delivery was aggressive and nontraditional, her message was tied to conservative traditional values. This posed issues for how Palin's address was received. Palin's approach appeared to be undermined by relying on traditional values while serving as an example for the advancement for women.

### Rhetorical Theory

The lack of rhetorical models for Ferraro and Palin to rely on contributed to the struggle of developing rhetorical agency. As discussed previously, feminist criticism provided the

historical background of how women had consistently been excluded from entering influential roles in society. When women are excluded from holding prominent roles in society, they also are excluded from influencing the standards of those roles. As Campbell described, the role women have held in society has been determined by the dominant male values that have persisted in society (2005). As a result, women have been excluded from the development of language that reflects their personal experience which has left women with only the male standard of language to describe their experiences (Kramarae, 2004c). With a lack of influence on the creation of language the standard of language has been reliant on the male standard which has created double standards that have bound women to conform to a standard of credibility that purposely excludes them. Jamieson's double binds have developed as a result from the exclusion of women. Despite the strides women have made the binds remain and are reinforced since people rely on the stereotypes created by the binds to determine feminine and masculine behavior (Woodhall & Fridkin, 2007).

Running for the role of the vice presidential candidate was problematic for both women. As discussed previously, the vice presidential role itself was difficult for a woman to develop credibility for. Although the role was the second highest political office in the nation the role has often been dismissed as a ceremonial role (Bostdorff, 1991). Ferraro and Palin were vying for a role that was viewed unimportant and feminine in nature. Developing a sense of rhetorical agency was difficult for Ferraro and Palin since the normal standard to follow was developed for men. The stereotypes created through the binds contributed to the difficulties of developing agency by reinforcing the traditional standards which threatened their ability to develop credibility as viable candidates. A rhetorical balance was needed to combat the binds while not completely negating a sense of femininity that the audience would have been expecting.

In Ferraro's response to this difficult rhetorical situation she developed a subtle approach that allowed her to assume the role of the speaker. Ferraro constructed her address in order for her to complete several purposes simultaneously. As previously discussed, through Ferraro's address she used three specific quotations with very specific purposes which were placed in the introduction, in the middle and in the closing of the address to allow Ferraro to assume the role of a legitimate speaker. Ferraro was enacting the process of change for the audience, from a masculine sense of domination to a feminine sense of appropriation, then to a feminist enactment of the strong female political leader. This approach allowed Ferraro to combat several of the binds. First, the strategy allowed Ferraro to combat the feminine/competence bind by demonstrating her ability to balance her feminine characteristics and her competence. Ferraro did this by assuming the role as the speaker in combination with describing her hard working American background and appeals to the American dream. Second, Ferraro was also able to challenge the silence/shame bind since she was successful in assuming the role of the speaker through her use of carefully placed quotations and construction of her message. Ferraro was also able to balance the sameness/difference bind because although she was a woman, she did not allow her gender to become the main focal point of her address but she also did not exhibit overly masculine characteristics trying to fulfill the male standard. It was a difficult balancing act but Ferraro prevented herself from being caught in the trap despite not fighting the traditional characteristics of a vice presidential candidate. An additional bind Ferraro was able to address was the womb/brain bind which she did by establishing her competence first through the use of her personal narratives that she tied into the theme of the address. The key to combating the womb/brain bind was that Ferraro made the audience view her as a candidate first and waited until the end of her address to share her traditional feminine roles as a mother and wife. Ferraro's

efforts worked together to combat the double binds and assume the role of a vice presidential candidate.

Palin's response to her rhetorical situation was quite different than Ferraro's. Since Jamieson's double binds are based on the feminist idea that women have been oppressed through systemic means, it can be assumed that Palin did not base her rhetoric on combating the binds that have restricted women in politics. Instead, Palin used her rhetorical opportunity to redefine feminism that would align with conservative values and provide a sense of rhetorical agency for conservative women. Since post-feminism beliefs coincide with the traditional values of self-reliance and personal freedom of the Republican Party it is not surprising that Palin relied on a post-feminist approach in developing her rhetorical response. In her efforts to redefine feminism, Palin in many ways ended up reinforcing the double binds. In the case of the womb/brain bind, Palin focused a significant amount of time from the beginning of her address establishing her traditional feminine roles of a mother, wife and daughter before establishing her credibility as a vice presidential candidate. In this approach the audience was viewing Palin as a mother and wife first and a candidate second. The unintended consequence was reinforcing the bind. Palin attempted to balance her femininity and competence by using an aggressive tone and numerous attacks on the opponent. Yet, the effect was the image of an aggressive hockey mom which did not build her competence as a vice presidential candidate and reinforced the feminine/competence bind. The next bind, sameness/difference, was also reinforced by Palin's rhetoric because she emphasized her traditional feminine roles which demonstrated how different she was. Although Palin intended to set herself apart from other candidates, she underestimated how different she already was from the traditional vice presidential candidate. The silence/shame bind did not seem to have negative effects on Palin. Perhaps because at the time of her

nomination women had come far enough to not make the bind a significant issue. Either way Palin's rhetoric did not shame her nor did it silence her.

One bind that has not been addressed in either of the analysis was the aging/invisibility bind because the rhetoric from either address did not address this rhetorical issue. The aging/invisibility bind explains that as women age they loss their power and become invisible in society. If this project were to review other pieces of rhetoric from either campaign this issue may appear but it did not in these two addresses.

Both candidates fulfilled specific purposes of their address very well and in others not as well. Overall, Ferraro's rhetorical response to the double binds and the purpose of the acceptance address was constructed and delivered the most effectively. Palin's rhetorical response did not adequately address the concerns of the double binds since Palin's beliefs were not rooted in the core beliefs on feminism which is where the binds originated.

### Limitations

There were two noticeable limitations discovered during this project. The limited research into vice presidential acceptance addresses and the lack of research comparing the only two women nominated as vice presidential candidates. Despite the limitations, the material that was researched provided adequate information for the start of research into the rhetorical responses of women vice presidential candidates.

One of the most significant limitations to this project was based on the limited research on previous vice presidential acceptance addresses. Vice presidential candidates are generally dismissed since they are not the top of ticket and as discussed previously, the role of the vice president has historically been ceremonial. Only recently has the vice president garnered significant responsibilities. The majority of research that examined vice presidential candidates

rhetoric has focused on other forms of campaign oration such as debate, interview and event rhetoric. Vice presidential acceptance addresses receive little attention as a campaign progresses. Perhaps, the acceptance address is the first official speaking engagement and serves as an introduction to the vice presidential candidate. It is later on through the campaign that the candidate delivers more in-depth rhetoric. Since vice presidential candidates are secondary the goal may be to establish that they are qualified to be a vice president, which the role does not require much consideration. The focus in the campaign and especially at the convention is focused on the presidential candidate.

Another obvious limitation to the study was the lack of previous rhetorical models based on female speakers. The previous research on the Ferraro's address appeared to be fleeting and was rarely revisited. Even after Palin's nomination research into Palin's address only briefly cited Ferraro's address. Not only have there been just two women nominated for the role which had limited previous research but there has been very limited research exploring these two women in the same article. Much of the research has compared Ferraro to Bush during the 1984 campaign, but the research primarily reviewed the vice presidential debates or other campaign rhetoric. Rarely were Ferraro and Bush's acceptance addresses researched for comparison. As for Palin she was compared to Joe Biden but often times she was compared to Clinton in the 2008 campaign. Clinton was not even a candidate after losing the closely contested Democratic primary to Barack Obama. At the time Clinton had a very good campaign during the primary and delivered excellent examples of campaign rhetoric. This is important because it was the first time an African American and a woman were campaigning against one another in a very close primary election. Once the primary was over Palin's nomination was announced. Never had so many "firsts" occurred at a time. Since Clinton and Palin's campaigns occurred relatively close

the focus was placed on the two examples of highly visible women delivering political rhetoric at that time.

The limitations bring about some interesting areas to further study. With very little research focusing on the only two women to be nominated for the vice presidency it would be beneficial to expand upon this area of rhetorical criticism. Also, with Clinton losing the Democratic primary she became the Secretary of State which allowed her the unique rhetorical opportunity to deliver important speeches. Although, Clinton's rhetoric has not been reviewed in this project her rhetoric would serve as a rhetorical model for women in politics. To conclude this section, there are limitations women face when developing political rhetoric, which is even more reason to expand the area of research for future women.

#### Future Research

Ferraro and Palin serve as the rhetorical models for future women to run for higher political office and it is essential that more attention is spent on researching their rhetorical choices. Through these two rhetorical models a sense of rhetorical agency has begun to develop for women to rely on in the future. Yet, the rhetorical agency Ferraro and Palin begun to develop will not expand unless further research is conducted. This would provide a better understanding on areas such as reclaiming language to develop a sense of agency. Further research in this particular area may be able to demonstrate how women are gradually breaking away from the muted group and into the area of agency ownership. It would be interesting to tie this into the history of feminist rhetoric to view how rhetorical choices have transformed over time. This would be especially intriguing in just the short time women have been involved in running for higher political office in the United States.

One particular area that would be beneficial to devote further research would be in the area of post-feminist rhetoric. Understanding the post-feminist rhetorical responses women develop in addressing political challenges would be interesting to research the effectiveness of the rhetorical response. Palin drew attention to the rhetorical strategy and it would be beneficial in developing the rhetorical models available to women.

Not only did this project explore the development of Ferraro and Palin's sense of agency but a base for female leadership credentials was beginning to emerge as well. Further exploration into the development of leadership credentials for women through the use of rhetoric would be beneficial for women in the future running for office, but also for researchers to use in the evaluation of such candidates. Although there have only been two women in the United States who have been nominated as vice presidential candidates we should not forget that many women have run for other political offices. One area to consider would be the women who have ran for governor and congress. The rhetoric of women candidates in different races at different levels of government may have interesting research findings. Especially, how women running for different political offices have responded to the rhetorical challenge of double binds. Another area of political leadership to consider for further rhetorical research would be first ladies. The political roles women hold whether elected or not come with a certain level of power and influence which shapes the image of women in society. It also shapes the rhetorical models available for women in the role in the future.

In the limitations section of this paper Hillary Clinton's rhetorical significance was discussed and should be furthered researched. What is interesting about Clinton's rhetoric is that it has evolved over time and with each role she has held. Clinton is an attorney who has held several politically significant roles: first lady of Arkansas, First Lady of the United States, state

senator, presidential candidate, and Secretary of State. When women have held multiple political roles they face unique rhetorical challenges. Further research into the rhetorical models women like Clinton provide are needed for future women.

To further develop a rhetorical foundation for women certain roles need to have more research. The role of first lady of the United States is a prime example of a political role that has changed over time and faced unique rhetorical challenges. Understanding how the rhetorical model of the First Lady has changed could further the rhetorical model available to women as when.

Through this project it became evident that further research was needed on vice presidential acceptance addresses. Even though the role has been rather obscure vice presidents have on occasion stepped into the shoes of the president, and diverting additional attention to those candidates vying for the role would be rather beneficial. The additional research into these areas would help to expand the foundation women have been needing to establish a wide research base.

### Summary

Since the purpose of this project was to provide the foundation for understanding the struggles women have faced in society when developing political rhetorical strategies it is important to conclude that despite the findings additional research is needed to further the efforts of women. This chapter reviewed the differences that Ferraro and Palin encountered and how that shaped their rhetorical responses. The research questions that were proposed from in the beginning of the project were answered based on the rhetorical analysis. A closer look at the rhetorical significance of each candidate's strategies was reviewed. Finally, the limitations of the study were explored along with proposals for future research.

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